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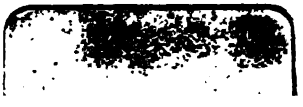

THE WAY WE LIVE NOW.

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF "BARCHESTER TOWERS."

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1875.

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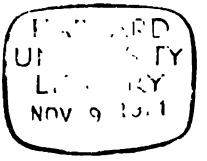

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VOL. 1493.

THE WAY WE LIVE NOW BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE WAY WE LIVE NOW.

CHAPTER I.

Three Editors.

LET the reader be introduced to Lady Carbury, upon whose character and doings much will depend of whatever interest these pages may have, as she sits at her writing-table in her own room in her own house in Welbeck Street. Lady Carbury spent many hours at her desk, and wrote many letters,—wrote also very much beside letters. She spoke of herself in these days as a woman devoted to Literature, always spelling the word with a big L. Something of the nature of her devotion may be learned by the perusal of three letters which on this morning she had written with a quickly running hand. Lady Carbury was rapid in everything, and in nothing more rapid than in the writing of letters. Here is Letter No. 1;—

"Thursday, Welbeck Street.

"DEAR FRIEND,—I have taken care that you shall have the early sheets of my two new volumes to-morrow, or Saturday at latest, so that you may, if so minded, give a poor struggler like myself a lift in your next week's paper. Do give a poor struggler a lift. You and I have so much in common, and I have ventured to flatter myself that we are really friends! I do not flatter you when I say, that not only would aid from you help me more

than from any other quarter, but also that praise from you would gratify my vanity more than any other praise. I almost think you will like my 'Criminal Queens.' The sketch of Semiramis is at any rate spirited, though I had to twist it about a little to bring her in guilty. Cleopatra, of course, I have taken from Shakespeare. What a wench she was! I could not quite make Julia a queen; but it was impossible to pass over so piquant a character. You will recognise in the two or three ladies of the empire how faithfully I have studied my Gibbon. Poor dear old Belisarius! I have done the best I could with Joanna, but I could not bring myself to care for her. In our days she would simply have gone to Broadmore. I hope you will not think that I have been too strong in my delineations of Henry VIII. and his sinful but unfortunate Howard. I don't care a bit about Anne Boleyne. I am afraid that I have been tempted into too great length about the Italian Catherine; but in truth she has been my favourite. What a woman! What a devil! Pity that a second Dante could not have constructed for her a special hell. How one traces the effect of her training in the life of our Scotch Mary. I trust you will go with me in my view as to the Queen of Scots. Guilty! guilty always! Adultery, murder, treason, and all the rest of it. But recommended to mercy because she was royal. A queen bred, born and married, and with such other queens around her, how could she have escaped to be guilty? Marie Antoinette I have not quite acquitted. It would be uninteresting;—perhaps untrue. I have accused her lovingly, and have kissed when I scourged. I trust the British public will not be angry because I do not whitewash Caroline, especially as I go along with them altogether in abusing her husband.

"But I must not take up your time by sending you

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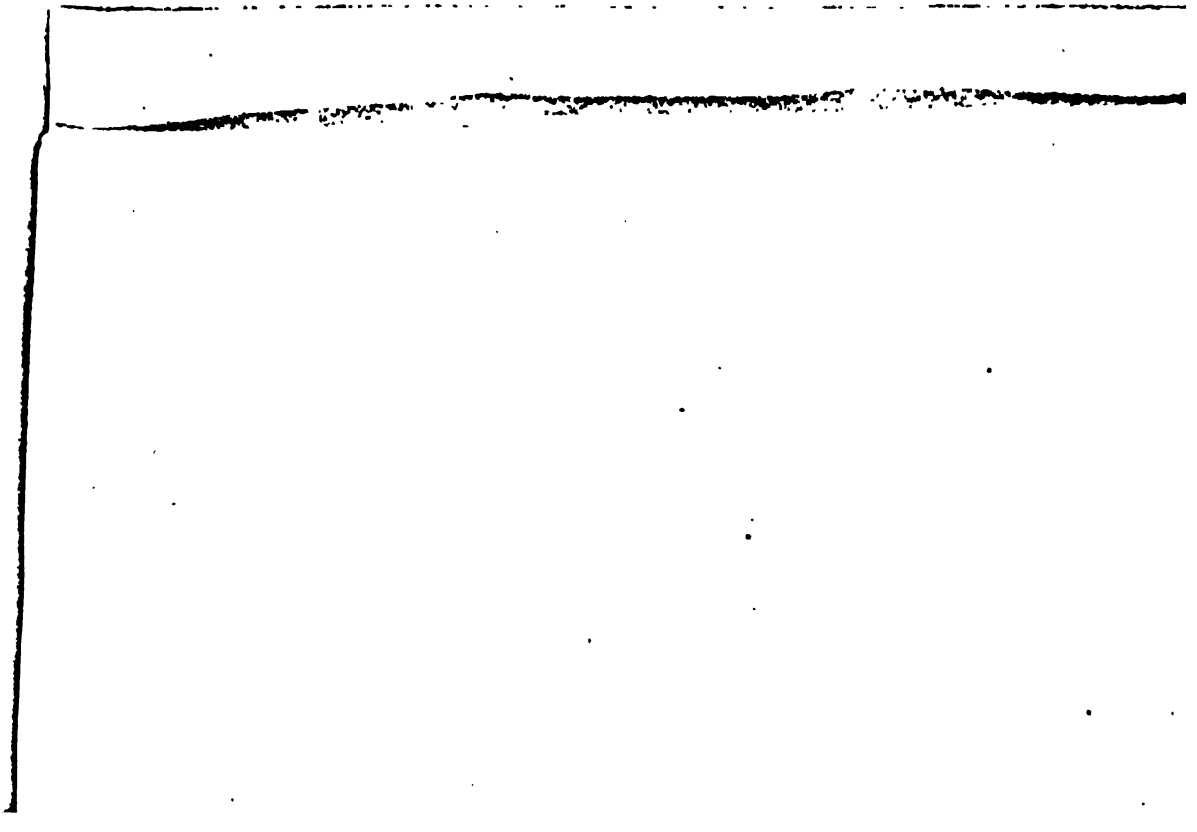

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to take such good things as came in his way, and could hardly afford to be independent. It must be confessed that literary scruple had long departed from his mind. Letter No. 2 was as follows;—

"Welbeck Street, 25th February, 18—

"DEAR MR. BOOKER,—I have told Mr. Leadham"—Mr. Leadham was senior partner in the enterprising firm of publishers known as Messrs. Leadham and Loiter—"to send you an early copy of my 'Criminal Queens.' I have already settled with my friend Mr. Broune that I am to do your 'New Tale of a Tub' in the 'Breakfast Table.' Indeed, I am about it now, and am taking great pains with it. If there is anything you wish to have specially said as to your view of the Protestantism of the time, let me know. I should like you to say a word as to the accuracy of my historical details, which I know you can safely do. Don't put it off, as the sale does so much depend on early notices. I am only getting a royalty, which does not commence till the first four hundred are sold.

"Yours sincerely,
"MATILDA CARBURY."

"ALFRED BOOKER, ESQ.
"'Literary Chronicle,' Office, Strand."

There was nothing in this which shocked Mr. Booker. He laughed inwardly, with a pleasantly reticent chuckle, as he thought of Lady Carbury dealing with his views of Protestantism,—as he thought also of the numerous historical errors into which that clever lady must inevitably fall in writing about matters of which he believed her to know nothing. But he was quite alive to the fact that a favourable notice in the "Breakfast Table" of his very thoughtful work, called the "New Tale of a Tub," would

serve him, even though written by the hand of a female literary charlatan, and he would have no compunction as to repaying the service by fulsome praise in the "Literary Chronicle." He would not probably say that the book was accurate, but he would be able to declare that it was delightful reading, that the feminine characteristics of the queens had been touched with a masterly hand, and that the work was one which would certainly make its way into all drawing-rooms. He was an adept at this sort of work, and knew well how to review such a book as Lady Carbury's "Criminal Queens," without bestowing much trouble on the reading. He could almost do it without cutting the book, so that its value for purposes of after sale might not be injured. And yet Mr. Booker was an honest man, and had set his face persistently against many literary malpractices. Stretched-out type, insufficient lines, and the French habit of meandering with a few words over an entire page, had been rebuked by him with conscientious strength. He was supposed to be rather an Aristides among reviewers. But circumstanced as he was he could not oppose himself altogether to the usages of the time. "Bad; of course it is bad," he said to a young friend who was working with him on his periodical. "Who doubts that? How many very bad things are there that we do! But if we were to attempt to reform all our bad ways at once, we should never do any good thing. I am not strong enough to put the world straight, and I doubt if you are." Such was Mr. Booker.

Then there was letter No. 3, to Mr. Ferdinand Alf. Mr. Alf managed, and, as it was supposed, chiefly owned, the "Evening Pulpit," which during the last two years had become "quite a property," as men connected with the press were in the habit of saying. The "Evening

Pulpit" was supposed to give daily to its readers all that had been said and done up to two o'clock in the day by all the leading people in the metropolis, and to prophesy with wonderful accuracy what would be the sayings and doings of the twelve following hours. This was effected with an air of wonderful omniscience, and not unfrequently with an ignorance hardly surpassed by its arrogance. But the writing was clever. The facts, if not true, were well invented; the arguments, if not logical, were seductive. The presiding spirit of the paper had the gift, at any rate, of knowing what the people for whom he catered would like to read, and how to get his subjects handled, so that the reading should be pleasant. Mr. Booker's "Literary Chronicle" did not presume to entertain any special political opinions. The "Breakfast Table" was decidedly Liberal. The "Evening Pulpit" was much given to politics, but held strictly to the motto which it had assumed;—

"Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri;"—

and consequently had at all times the invaluable privilege of abusing what was being done, whether by one side or by the other. A newspaper that wishes to make its fortune should never waste its columns and weary its readers by praising anything. Eulogy is invariably dull,—a fact that Mr. Alf had discovered and had utilized.

Mr. Alf had, moreover, discovered another fact. Abuse from those who occasionally praise is considered to be personally offensive, and they who give personal offence will sometimes make the world too hot to hold them. But censure from those who are always finding fault is regarded so much as a matter of course that it ceases to be objectionable. The caricaturist, who draws only caricatures, is held to be justifiable, let him take what

liberties he may with a man's face and person. It is his trade, and his business calls upon him to vilify all that he touches. But were an artist to publish a series of portraits, in which two out of a dozen were made to be hideous, he would certainly make two enemies, if not more. Mr. Alf never made enemies, for he praised no one, and, as far as the expression of his newspaper went, was satisfied with nothing.

Personally, Mr. Alf was a remarkable man. No one knew whence he came or what he had been. He was supposed to have been born a German Jew; and certain ladies said that they could distinguish in his tongue the slightest possible foreign accent. Nevertheless it was conceded to him that he knew England as only an Englishman can know it. During the last year or two he had "come up" as the phrase goes, and had come up very thoroughly. He had been black-balled at three or four clubs, but had effected an entrance at two or three others, and had learned a manner of speaking of those which had rejected him calculated to leave on the minds of hearers a conviction that the societies in question were antiquated, imbecile, and moribund. He was never weary of implying that not to know Mr. Alf, not to be on good terms with Mr. Alf, not to understand that let Mr. Alf have been born where he might and how he might he was always to be recognised as a desirable acquaintance, was to be altogether out in the dark. And that which he so constantly asserted, or implied, men and women around him began at last to believe,—and Mr. Alf became an acknowledged something in the different worlds of politics, letters, and fashion.

He was a good-looking man, about forty years old, but carrying himself as though he was much younger, spare, below the middle height, with dark brown hair

which would have shown a tinge of grey but for the dyer's art, with well-cut features, with a smile constantly on his mouth the pleasantness of which was always belied by the sharp severity of his eyes. He dressed with the utmost simplicity, but also with the utmost care. He was unmarried, had a small house of his own close to Berkeley Square at which he gave remarkable dinner parties, kept four or five hunters in Northamptonshire, and was reputed to earn £6,000 a year out of the "Evening Pulpit" and to spend about half of that income. He also was intimate after his fashion with Lady Carbury, whose diligence in making and fostering useful friendships had been unwearied. Her letter to Mr. Alf was as follows;—

"DEAR MR. ALF,—Do tell me who wrote the review on Fitzgerald Barker's last poem. Only I know you won't. I remember nothing done so well. I should think the poor wretch will hardly hold his head up again before the autumn. But it was fully deserved. I have no patience with the pretensions of would-be poets who contrive by toadying and underground influences to get their volumes placed on every drawing-room table. I know no one to whom the world has been so good-natured in this way as to Fitzgerald Barker, but I have heard of no one who has extended the good nature to the length of reading his poetry.

"Is it not singular how some men continue to obtain the reputation of popular authorship without adding a word to the literature of their country worthy of note? It is accomplished by unflagging assiduity in the system of puffing. To puff and to get one's self puffed have become different branches of a new profession. Alas, me! I wish I might find a class open in which lessons

could be taken by such a poor tyro as myself. Much as I hate the thing from my very soul, and much as I admire the consistency with which the "Pulpit" has opposed it, I myself am so much in want of support for my own little efforts, and am struggling so hard honestly to make for myself a remunerative career, that I think, were the opportunity offered to me, I should pocket my honour, lay aside the high feeling which tells me that praise should be bought neither by money nor friendship, and descend among the low things, in order that I might one day have the pride of feeling that I had succeeded by my own work in providing for the needs of my children.

"But I have not as yet commenced the descent downwards; and therefore I am still bold enough to tell you that I shall look, not with concern but with a deep interest, to anything which may appear in the "Pulpit" respecting my "Criminal Queens." I venture to think that the book,—though I wrote it myself,—has an importance of its own which will secure for it some notice. That my inaccuracy will be laid bare and presumption scourged I do not in the least doubt, but I think your reviewer will be able to certify that the sketches are life-like and the portraits well considered. You will not hear me told, at any rate, that I had better sit at home and darn my stockings, as you said the other day of that poor unfortunate Mrs. Effington Stubbs.

"I have not seen you for the last three weeks. I have a few friends every Tuesday evening;—pray come next week or the week following. And pray believe that no amount of editorial or critical severity shall make me receive you otherwise than with a smile.

"Most sincerely yours,

"MATILDA CARBURY."

Lady Carbury, having finished her third letter, threw herself back in her chair, and for a moment or two closed her eyes, as though about to rest. But she soon remembered that the activity of her life did not admit of such rest. She therefore seized her pen and began scribbling further notes.

CHAPTER II.

The Carbury Family.

SOMETHING of herself and condition Lady Carbury has told the reader in the letters given in the former chapter, but more must be added. She has declared she had been cruelly slandered; but she has also shown that she was not a woman whose words about herself could be taken with much confidence. If the reader does not understand so much from her letters to the three editors they have been written in vain. She has been made to say that her object in work was to provide for the need of her children, and that with that noble purpose before her she was struggling to make for herself a career in literature. Detestably false as had been her letters to the editors, absolutely and abominably foul as was the entire system by which she was endeavouring to achieve success, far away from honour and honesty as she had been carried by her ready subserviency to the dirty things among which she had lately fallen, nevertheless her statements about herself were substantially true. She had been ill-treated. She had been slandered. She was true to her children,—especially devoted to one of them,—and was ready to work her nails off if by doing so she could advance their interests.

She was the widow of one Sir Patrick Carbury, who

many years since had done great things as a soldier in India, and had been thereupon created a baronet. He had married a young wife late in life and, having found out when too late that he had made a mistake, had occasionally spoilt his darling and occasionally ill used her. In doing each he had done it abundantly. Among Lady Carbury's faults had never been that of even incipient, —not even of sentimental infidelity to her husband. When as a very lovely and penniless girl of eighteen she had consented to marry a man of forty-four who had the spending of a large income, she had made up her mind to abandon all hope of that sort of love which poets describe and which young people generally desire to experience. Sir Patrick at the time of his marriage was red-faced, stout, bald, very choleric, generous in money, suspicious in temper, and intelligent. He knew how to govern men. He could read and understand a book. There was nothing mean about him. He had his attractive qualities. He was a man who might be loved;—but he was hardly a man for love. The young Lady Carbury had understood her position and had determined to do her duty. She had resolved before she went to the altar that she would never allow herself to flirt and she had never flirted. For fifteen years things had gone tolerably well with her,—by which it is intended that the reader should understand that they had so gone that she had been able to tolerate them. They had been home in England for three or four years, and then Sir Patrick had returned with some new and higher appointment. For fifteen years, though he had been passionate, imperious, and often cruel he had never been jealous. A boy and a girl had been born to them, to whom both father and mother had been over indulgent;—but the mother, according to her lights, had endeavoured to do her duty

by them. But from the commencement of her life she had been educated in deceit, and her married life had seemed to make the practice of deceit necessary to her. Her mother had run away from her father, and she had been tossed to and fro between this and that protector, sometimes being in danger of wanting any one to care for her, till she had been made sharp, incredulous, and untrustworthy by the difficulties of her position. But she was clever, and had picked up an education and good manners amidst the difficulties of her childhood,—and had been beautiful to look at. To marry and have the command of money, to do her duty correctly, to live in a big house and be respected, had been her ambition,—and during the first fifteen years of her married life she was successful amidst great difficulties. She would smile within five minutes of violent ill-usage. Her husband would even strike her,—and the first effort of her mind would be given to conceal the fact from all the world. In latter years he drank too much, and she struggled hard first to prevent the evil, and then to prevent and to hide the ill effects of the evil. But in doing all this she schemed, and lied, and lived a life of manœuvres. Then, at last, when she felt that she was no longer quite a young woman, she allowed herself to attempt to form friendships for herself, and among her friends was one of the other sex. If fidelity in a wife be compatible with such friendship, if the married state does not exact from a woman the necessity of debarring herself from all friendly intercourse with any man except her lord, Lady Carbury was not faithless. But Sir Carbury became jealous, spoke words which even she could not endure, did things which drove even her beyond the calculations of her prudence,—and she left him. But even this she did in so guarded a way that, as to every step she took,

she could prove her innocence. Her life at that period is of little moment to our story, except that it is essential that the reader should know in what she had been slandered. For a month or two all hard words had been said against her by her husband's friends, and even by Sir Patrick himself. But gradually the truth was known, and after a year's separation they came again together and she remained the mistress of his house till he died. She brought him home to England, but during the short period left to him of life in his old country he had been a worn-out, dying invalid. But the scandal of her great misfortune had followed her, and some people were never tired of reminding others that in the course of her married life Lady Carbury had run away from her husband, and had been taken back again by the kind-hearted old gentleman.

Sir Patrick had left behind him a moderate fortune, though by no means great wealth. To his son, who was now Sir Felix Carbury, he had left £1,000 a year; and to his widow as much, with a provision that after her death the latter sum should be divided between his son and daughter. It therefore came to pass that the young man, who had already entered the army when his father died, and upon whom devolved no necessity of keeping a house, and who in fact not unfrequently lived in his mother's house, had an income equal to that with which his mother and his sister were obliged to maintain a roof over their head. Now Lady Carbury, when she was released from her thraldom at the age of forty, had no idea at all of passing her future life amidst the ordinary penances of widowhood. She had hitherto endeavoured to do her duty, knowing that in accepting her position she was bound to take the good and the bad together. She had certainly encountered hitherto much that was

bad. To be scolded, watched, beaten, and sworn at by a choleric old man till she was at last driven out of her house by the violence of his ill-usage; to be taken back as a favour with the assurance that her name would for the remainder of her life be unjustly tarnished; to have her flight constantly thrown in her face; and then at last to become for a year or two the nurse of a dying debauchee, was a high price to pay for such good things as she had hitherto enjoyed. Now at length had come to her a period of relaxation—her reward, her freedom, her chance of happiness. She thought much about herself, and resolved on one or two things. The time for love had gone by, and she would have nothing to do with it. Nor would she marry again for convenience. But she would have friends,—real friends; friends who could help her,—and whom possibly she might help. She would, too, make some career for herself, so that life might not be without an interest to her. She would live in London, and would become somebody at any rate in some circle. Accident at first rather than choice had thrown her among literary people, but that accident had, during the last two years, been supported and corroborated by the desire which had fallen upon her of earning money. She had known from the first that economy would be necessary so her,—not chiefly or perhaps not at all from a feeling that she and her daughter could not live comfortably together on a thousand a year,—but on behalf of her son. She wanted no luxury but a house so placed that people might conceive of her that she lived in a proper part of the town. Of her daughter's prudence she was as well convinced as of her own. She could trust Henrietta in everything. But her son, Sir Felix, was not very trustworthy. And yet Sir Felix was the darling of her heart.

At the time of the writing of the three letters, at which our story is supposed to begin, she was driven very hard for money. Sir Felix was then twenty-five, had been in a fashionable regiment for four years, had already sold out, and, to own the truth at once, had altogether wasted the property which his father had left him. So much the mother knew,—and knew, therefore, that with her limited income she must maintain not only herself and daughter, but also the baronet. She did not know, however, the amount of the baronet's obligations; —nor, indeed, did he, or any one else. A baronet, holding a commission in the Guards, and known to have had a fortune left him by his father, may go very far in getting into debt; and Sir Felix had made full use of all his privileges. His life had been in every way bad. He had become a burden on his mother so heavy,—and on his sister also,—that their life had become one of unavoidable embarrassments. But not for a moment had either of them ever quarrelled with him. Henrietta had been taught by the conduct of both father and mother that every vice might be forgiven in a man and in a son, though every virtue was expected from a woman, and especially from a daughter. The lesson had come to her so early in life that she had learned it without the feeling of any grievance. She lamented her brother's evil conduct as it affected him, but she pardoned it altogether as it affected herself. That all her interests in life should be made subservient to him was natural to her; and when she found that her little comforts were discontinued, and her moderate expenses curtailed because he, having eaten up all that was his own, was now eating up also all that was his mother's, she never complained. Henrietta had been taught to think that men in that rank of life in which she had been born always did eat up everything.

The mother's feeling was less noble,—or perhaps, it might be better said, more open to censure. The boy, who had been beautiful as a star, had ever been the cynosure of her eyes, the one thing on which her heart had riveted itself. Even during the career of his folly she had hardly ventured to say a word to him with the purport of stopping him on his road to ruin. In everything she had spoilt him as a boy, and in everything she still spoilt him as a man. She was almost proud of his vices, and had taken delight in hearing of doings which if not vicious of themselves had been ruinous from their extravagance. She had so indulged him that even in her own presence he was never ashamed of his own selfishness or apparently conscious of the injustice which he did to others.

From all this it had come to pass that that dabbling in literature which had been commenced partly perhaps from a sense of pleasure in the work, partly as a passport into society, had been converted into hard work by which money if possible might be earned. So that Lady Carbury when she wrote to her friends, the editors, of her struggles was speaking the truth. Tidings had reached her of this and the other man's success, and,—coming near to her still,—of this and that other woman's earnings in literature. And it had seemed to her that, within moderate limits, she might give a wide field to her hopes. Why should she not add a thousand a year to her income, so that Felix might again live like a gentleman and marry that heiress who, in Lady Carbury's look-out into the future, was destined to make all things straight! Who was so handsome as her son? Who could make himself more agreeable? Who had more of that audacity which is the chief thing necessary to the winning of heiresses? And then he could make his wife Lady Carbury. If

only enough money might be earned to tide over the present evil day, all might be well.

The one most essential obstacle to the chance of success in all this was probably Lady Carbury's conviction that her end was to be obtained not by producing good books, but by inducing certain people to say that her books were good. She did work hard at what she wrote, —hard enough at any rate to cover her pages quickly; and was, by nature, a clever woman. She could write after a glib, common-place, sprightly fashion, and had already acquired the knack of spreading all she knew very thin, so that it might cover a vast surface. She had no ambition to write a good book, but was painfully anxious to write a book that the critics should say was good. Had Mr. Broune, in his closet, told her that her book was absolutely trash, but had undertaken at the same time to have it violently praised in the "Breakfast Table" it may be doubted whether the critic's own opinion would have even wounded her vanity. The woman was false from head to foot, but there was much of good in her, false though she was.

Whether Sir Felix, her son, had become what he was solely by bad training, or whether he had been born bad, who shall say? It is hardly possible that he should not have been better had he been taken away as an infant and subjected to moral training by moral teachers. And yet again it is hardly possible that any training or want of training should have produced a heart so utterly incapable of feeling for others as was his. He could not even feel his own misfortunes unless they touched the outward comforts of the moment. It seemed that he lacked sufficient imagination to realise future misery though the futurity to be considered was divided from the present but by a single month, a single week,—but

by a single night. He liked to be kindly treated, to be praised and petted, to be well fed and caressed; and they who so treated him were his chosen friends. He had in this the instincts of a horse, not approaching the higher sympathies of a dog. But it cannot be said of him that he had ever loved any one to the extent of denying himself a moment's gratification on that loved one's behalf. His heart was a stone. But he was beautiful to look at, ready-witted, and intelligent. He was very dark, with that soft olive complexion which so generally gives to young men an appearance of aristocratic breeding. His hair, which was never allowed to become long, was nearly black, and was soft and silky without that taint of grease which is so common with silken-headed darlings. His eyes were long, brown in colour, and were made beautiful by the perfect arch of the perfect eyebrow. But perhaps the glory of the face was due more to the finished moulding and fine symmetry of the nose and mouth than to his other features. On his short upper lip he had a moustache as well formed as his eyebrows, but he wore no other beard. The form of his chin too was perfect, but it lacked that sweetness and softness of expression, indicative of softness of heart, which a dimple conveys. He was about five feet nine in height, and was as excellent in figure as in face. It was admitted by men and clamorously asserted by women that no man had ever been more handsome than Felix Carbury, and it was admitted also that he never showed consciousness of his beauty. He had given himself airs on many scores;—on the score of his money, poor fool, while it lasted; on the score of his title; on the score of his army standing till he lost it; and especially on the score of superiority in fashionable intellect. But he had been clever enough to dress himself always with simplicity and to

avoid the appearance of thought about his outward man. As yet the little world of his associates had hardly found out how callous were his affections,—or rather how devoid he was of affection. His airs and his appearance, joined with some cleverness, had carried him through even the viciousness of his life. In one matter he had marred his name, and by a moment's weakness had injured his character among his friends more than he had done by the folly of three years. There had been a quarrel between him and a brother officer, in which he had been the aggressor; and, when the moment came in which a man's heart should have produced manly conduct, he had first threatened and had then shown the white feather. That was now a year since, and he had partly outlived the evil;—but some men still remembered that Felix Carbury had been cowed, and had cowered.

It was now his business to marry an heiress. He was well aware that it was so, and was quite prepared to face his destiny. But he lacked something in the art of making love. He was beautiful, had the manners of a gentleman, could talk well, lacked nothing of audacity, and had no feeling of repugnance at declaring a passion which he did not feel. But he knew so little of the passion, that he could hardly make even a young girl believe that he felt it. When he talked of love, he not only thought that he was talking nonsense, but showed that he thought so. From this fault he had already failed with one young lady reputed to have £40,000, who had refused him because, as she naively said, she knew "he did not really care." "How can I show that I care more than by wishing to make you my wife?" he had asked. "I don't know that you can, but all the same you don't care," she said. And so that young lady escaped the pit-fall. Now there was another young lady,

to whom the reader shall be introduced in time, whom Sir Felix was instigated to pursue with unremitting diligence. Her wealth was not defined, as had been the £40,000 of her predecessor, but was known to be very much greater than that. It was, indeed, generally supposed to be fathomless, bottomless, endless. It was said that in regard to money for ordinary expenditure, money for houses, servants, horses, jewels, and the like, one sum was the same as another to the father of this young lady. He had great concerns;—concerns so great that the payment of ten or twenty thousand pounds upon any trifle was the same thing to him,—as to men who are comfortable in their circumstances it matters little whether they pay sixpence or ninepence for their mutton chops. Such a man may be ruined at any time; but there was no doubt that to any one marrying his daughter during the present season of his outrageous prosperity he could give a very large fortune indeed. Lady Carbury, who had known the rock on which her son had been once wrecked, was very anxious that Sir Felix should at once make a proper use of the intimacy which he had effected in the house of this topping Crœsus of the day.

And now there must be a few words said about Henrietta Carbury. Of course she was of infinitely less importance than her brother, who was a baronet, the head of that branch of the Carbury's, and her mother's darling; and, therefore, a few words should suffice. She also was very lovely, being like her brother; but somewhat less dark and with features less absolutely regular. But she had in her countenance a full measure of that sweetness of expression which seems to imply that consideration of self is subordinated to consideration for others. This sweetness was altogether lacking to her brother. And her face was a true index of her character.

Again, who shall say why her brother and sister had become so opposite to each other; whether they would have been thus different had both been taken away as infants from their father's and mother's training, or whether the girl's virtues were owing altogether to the lower place which she had held in her parent's heart. She, at any rate, had not been spoilt by a title, by the command of money, and by the temptations of too early acquaintance with the world. At the present time she was barely twenty-one years old, and had not seen much of London society. Her mother did not frequent balls, and during the last two years there had grown upon them a necessity for economy which was inimical to many gloves and costly dresses. Sir Felix went out, of course, but Hetta Carbury spent most of her time at home with her mother in Welbeck Street. Occasionally the world saw her, and when the world did see her the world declared that she was a charming girl. The world was so far right.

But for Henrietta Carbury the romance of life had already commenced in real earnest. There was another branch of the Carburys, the head branch, which was now represented by one Roger Carbury, of Carbury Hall. Roger Carbury was a gentleman of whom much will have to be said, but here, at this moment, it need only be told that he was passionately in love with his cousin Henrietta. He was, however, nearly forty years old, and there was one Paul Montague whom Henrietta had seen.

CHAPTER III.

The Beargarden.

LADY CARBURY'S house in Welbeck Street was a modest house enough,—with no pretensions to be a mansion, hardly assuming even to be a residence; but, having some money in her hands when she first took it, she had made it pretty and pleasant, and was still proud to feel that in spite of the hardness of her position she had comfortable belongings around her when her literary friends came to see her on her Tuesday evenings. Here she was now living with her son and daughter. The back drawing-room was divided from the front by doors that were permanently closed, and in this she carried on her great work. Here she wrote her books and contrived her system for the inveigling of editors and critics. Here she was rarely disturbed by her daughter, and admitted no visitors except editors and critics. But her son was controlled by no household laws, and would break in upon her privacy without remorse. She had hardly finished two galloping notes after completing her letter to Mr. Ferdinand Alf, when Felix entered the room with a cigar in his mouth and threw himself upon the sofa.

"My dear boy," she said, "pray leave your tobacco below when you come in here."

"What affectation it is, mother," he said, throwing, however, the half-smoked cigar into the fire-place. "Some women swear they like smoke, others say they hate it like the devil. It depends altogether on whether they wish to flatter or snub a fellow."

"You don't suppose that I wish to snub you?"

"Upon my word I don't know. I wonder whether you can let me have twenty pounds?"

"My dear Felix!"

"Just so, mother;—but how about the twenty pounds?"

"What is it for, Felix?"

"Well;—to tell the truth, to carry on the game for the nonce till something is settled. A fellow can't live without some money in his pocket. I do with as little as most fellows. I pay for nothing that I can help. I even get my hair cut on credit, and as long as it was possible I had a brougham, to save cabs."

"What is to be the end of it, Felix?"

"I never could see the end of anything, mother. I never could nurse a horse when the hounds were going well in order to be in at the finish. I never could pass a dish that I liked in favour of those that were to follow. What's the use?" The young man did not say "carpe diem," but that was the philosophy which he intended to preach.

"Have you been at the Melmotte's to-day?" It was now five o'clock on a winter afternoon, the hour at which ladies are drinking tea, and idle men playing whist at the clubs,—at which young idle men are sometimes allowed to flirt, and at which, as Lady Carbury thought, her son might have been paying his court to Marie Melmotte the great heiress.

"I have just come away."

"And what do you think of her?"

"To tell the truth, mother, I have thought very little about her. She is not pretty, she is not plain; she is not clever, she is not stupid; she is neither saint nor sinner."

"The more likely to make a good wife."

"Perhaps so. I am at any rate quite willing to believe that as wife she would be 'good enough for me.'"

"What does the mother say?"

"The mother is a caution. I cannot help speculating whether, if I marry the daughter, I shall ever find out where the mother came from. Dolly Longestaffe says that somebody says that she was a Bohemian Jewess; but I think she's too fat for that."

"What does it matter, Felix?"

"Not in the least."

"Is she civil to you?"

"Yes, civil enough."

"And the father?"

"Well, he does not turn me out, or anything of that sort. Of course there are half-a-dozen after her, and I think the old fellow is bewildered among them all. He's thinking more of getting dukes to dine with him than of his daughter's lovers. Any fellow might pick her up who happened to hit her fancy."

"And why not you?"

"Why not, mother? I am doing my best, and it's no good flogging a willing horse. Can you let me have the money?"

"Oh, Felix, I think you hardly know how poor we are. You have still got your hunters down at the place!"

"I have got two horses, if you mean that; and I haven't paid a shilling for their keep since the season began. Look here, mother; this is a risky sort of game, I grant, but I am playing it by your advice. If I can marry Miss Melmotte, I suppose all will be right. But I don't think the way to get her would be to throw up everything and let all the world know that I haven't got a copper. To do that kind of thing a man must live a little up to the mark. I've brought my hunting down to

a minimum, but if I gave it up altogether there would be lots of fellows to tell them in Grosvenor Square why I had done so."

There was an apparent truth in this argument which the poor woman was unable to answer. Before the interview was over the money demanded was forthcoming, though at the time it could be but ill afforded, and the youth went away apparently with a light heart, hardly listening to his mother's entreaties that the affair with Marie Melmotte might, if possible, be brought to a speedy conclusion.

Felix, when he left his mother, went down to the only club to which he now belonged. Clubs are pleasant resorts in all respects but one. They require ready money, or even worse than that in respect to annual payments,—money in advance; and the young baronet had been absolutely forced to restrict himself. He, as a matter of course, out of those to which he had possessed the right of entrance, chose the worst. It was called the Beargarden, and had been lately opened with the express view of combining parsimony with profligacy. Clubs were ruined, so said certain young parsimonious profligates, by providing comforts for old fogies who paid little or nothing but their subscriptions, and took out by their mere presence three times as much as they gave. This club was not to be opened till three o'clock in the afternoon, before which hour the promoters of the Beargarden thought it improbable that they and their fellows would want a club. There were to be no morning papers taken, no library, no morning-room. Dining-rooms, billiard-rooms, and card-rooms would suffice for the Beargarden. Everything was to be provided by a purveyor, so that the club should be cheated only by one man. Everything was to be luxurious, but the

uries were to be achieved at first cost. It had been appy thought, and the club was said to prosper. Herr ssner, the purveyor, was a jewel, and so carried on irs that there was no trouble about anything. He uld assist even in smoothing little difficulties as to settling of card accounts, and had behaved with the atest tenderness to the drawers of cheques whose ikers had harshly declared them to have "no effects." rr Vossner was a jewel, and the Beargarden was a cess. Perhaps no young man about town enjoyed Beargarden more thoroughly than did Sir Felix Carey. The club was in the close vicinity of other clubs, a small street turning out of St. James's Street, and ued itself on its outward quietness and sobriety. Why for stone-work for other people to look at;—why out money in marble pillars and cornices, seeing that can neither eat such things, nor drink them, nor able with them? But the Beargarden had the best wines, r thought that it had,—and the easiest chairs, and billiard-tables than which nothing more perfect had r been made to stand upon legs. Hither Sir Felix ided on that January afternoon as soon as he had mother's cheque for £20 in his pocket.

He found his special friend, Dolly Longestaffe, standon the steps with a cigar in his mouth, and gazing antly at the dull brick house opposite. "Going to e here, Dolly?" said Sir Felix.

"I suppose I shall, because it's such a lot of trouble go anywhere else. I'm engaged somewhere, I know; I'm not up to getting home and dressing. By rge! I don't know how fellows do that kind of thing. n't."

"Going to hunt to-morrow?"

"Well, yes; but I don't suppose I shall. I was going

to hunt every day last week, but my fellow never would get me up in time. I can't tell why it is that things are done in such a beastly way. Why shouldn't fellows begin to hunt at two or three, so that a fellow needn't get up in the middle of the night?"

"Because one can't ride by moonlight, Dolly."

"It isn't moonlight at three. At any rate I can't get myself to Euston Square by nine. I don't think that fellow of mine likes getting up himself. He says he comes in and wakes me, but I never remember it."

"How many horses have you got at Leighton, Dolly?"

"How many? There were five, but I think that fellow down there sold one; but then I think he bought another. I know he did something."

"Who rides them?"

"He does, I suppose. That is, of course, I ride them myself, only I so seldom get down. Somebody told me that Grasslough was riding two of them last week. I don't think I ever told him he might. I think he tipped that fellow of mine; and I call that a low kind of thing to do. I'd ask him, only I know he'd say that I had lent them. Perhaps I did when I was tight, you know."

"You and Grasslough were never pals."

"I don't like him a bit. He gives himself airs because he is a lord, and is devilish ill-natured. I don't know why he should want to ride my horses."

"To save his own."

"He isn't hard up. Why doesn't he have his own horses? I'll tell you what, Carbury, I've made up my mind to one thing, and, by Jove, I'll stick to it. I never will lend a horse again to anybody. If fellows want horses let them buy them."

"But some fellows haven't got any money, Dolly."

"Then they ought to go tick. I don't think I've

paid for any of mine I've bought this season. There was somebody here yesterday——"

"What! here at the club?"

"Yes; followed me here to say he wanted to be paid for something! It was horses, I think, because of the fellow's trousers."

"What did you say?"

"Me! Oh, I didn't say anything."

"And how did it end?"

"When he'd done talking I offered him a cigar, and while he was biting off the end I went up-stairs. I suppose he went away when he was tired of waiting."

"I'll tell you what, Dolly; I wish you'd let me ride two of yours for a couple of days,—that is, of course, if you don't want them yourself. You ain't tight now, at any rate."

"No; I ain't tight," said Dolly, with melancholy acquiescence.

"I mean that I wouldn't like to borrow your horses without your remembering all about it. Nobody knows as well as you do how awfully done up I am. I shall pull through at last, but it's an awful squeeze in the meantime. There's nobody I'd ask such a favour of except you."

"Well, you may have them;—that is, for two days. I don't know whether that fellow of mine will believe you. He wouldn't believe Grasslough, and told him so. But Grasslough took them out of the stables. That's what somebody told me."

"You could write a line to your groom."

"Oh, my dear fellow, that is such a bore; I don't think I could do that. My fellow will believe you, because you and I have been pals. I think I'll have a

little drop of curacoa before dinner. Come along and try it. It'll give us an appetite."

It was then nearly seven o'clock. Nine hours afterwards the same two men, with two others,—of whom young Lord Grasslough, Dolly Longestaffe's peculiar aversion, was one,—were just rising from a card-table in one of the up-stairs rooms of the club. For it was understood that, though the Beargarden was not to be open before three o'clock in the afternoon, the accommodation denied during the day was to be given freely during the night. No man could get a breakfast at the Beargarden, but suppers at three o'clock in the morning were quite within the rule. Such a supper, or rather succession of suppering, there had been to-night, various devils and broils and hot toasts having been brought up from time to time first for one and then for another. But there had been no cessation of gambling since the cards had first been opened about ten o'clock. At four in the morning Dolly Longestaffe was certainly in a condition to lend his horses and to remember nothing about it. He was quite affectionate with Lord Grasslough, as he was also with his other companions,—affection being the normal state of his mind when in that condition. He was by no means helplessly drunk, and was, perhaps, hardly more silly than when he was sober; but he was willing to play at any game whether he understood it or not, and for any stakes. When Sir Felix got up and said he would play no more, Dolly also got up, apparently quite contented. When Lord Grasslough, with a dark scowl on his face, expressed his opinion that it was not just the thing for men to break up like that when so much money had been lost, Dolly as willingly sat down again. But Dolly's sitting down was not sufficient. "I'm going to hunt to-morrow," said Sir Felix,

—meaning that day,—"and I shall play no more. A man must go to bed at some time."

"I don't see it at all," said Lord Grasslough. "It's an understood thing that when a man has won as much as you have he should stay."

"Stay how long?" said Sir Felix, with an angry look. "That's nonsense; there must be an end of everything, and there's an end of this for me to-night."

"Oh, if you choose," said his lordship.

"I do choose. Good night, Dolly; we'll settle this next time we meet. I've got it all entered."

The night had been one very serious in its results to Sir Felix. He had sat down to the card-table with the proceeds of his mother's cheque, a poor £20, and now he had,—he didn't at all know how much in his pockets. He also had drunk, but not so as to obscure his mind. He knew that Longestaffe owed him over £300, and he knew also that he had received more than that in ready money and cheques from Lord Grasslough and the other player. Dolly Longestaffe's money, too, would certainly be paid, though Dolly did complain of the importunity of his tradesmen. As he walked up St. James's Street, looking for a cab, he presumed himself to be worth over £700. When begging for a small sum from Lady Carbury, he had said that he could not carry on the game without some ready money, and had considered himself fortunate in fleecing his mother as he had done. Now he was in the possession of wealth,—of wealth that might, at any rate, be sufficient to aid him materially in the object he had in hand. He never for a moment thought of paying his bills. Even the large sum of which he had become so unexpectedly possessed would not have gone far with him in such a quixotic object as that; but he could now look bright,

and buy presents, and be seen with money in his hands. It is hard even to make love in these days without something in your purse.

He found no cab, but in his present frame of mind was indifferent to the trouble of walking home. There was something so joyous in the feeling of the possession of all this money that it made the night air pleasant to him. Then, of a sudden, he remembered the low wail with which his mother had spoken of her poverty when he demanded assistance from her. Now he could give her back the £20. But it occurred to him sharply, with an amount of carefulness quite new to him, that it would be foolish to do so. How soon might he want it again? And, moreover, he could not repay the money without explaining to her how he had gotten it. It would be preferable to say nothing about his money. As he let himself into the house and went up to his room he resolved that he would not say anything about it.

On that morning he was at the station at nine, and hunted down in Buckinghamshire, riding two of Dolly Longestaffe's horses,—for the use of which he paid Dolly Longestaffe's "fellow" thirty shillings.

CHAPTER IV.

Madame Melmotte's Ball.

THE next night but one after that of the gambling transaction at the Beargarden, a great ball was given in Grosvenor Square. It was a ball on a scale so magnificent that it had been talked about ever since Parliament met, now about a fortnight since. Some people had expressed an opinion that such a ball as this was intended to be could not be given successfully in February. Others declared that the money which was

to be spent,—an amount which would make this affair something quite new in the annals of ball-giving,—would give the thing such a character that it would certainly be successful. And much more than money had been expended. Almost incredible efforts had been made to obtain the co-operation of great people, and these efforts had at last been grandly successful. The Duchess of Stevenage had come up from Castle Albury herself to be present at it and to bring her daughters, though it has never been her Grace's wont to be in London at this inclement season. No doubt the persuasion used with the Duchess had been very strong. Her brother, Lord Alfred Grendall, was known to be in great difficulties, which,—so people said,—had been considerably modified by opportune pecuniary assistance. And then it was certain that one of the young Grendalls, Lord Alfred's second son, had been appointed to some mercantile position, for which he received a salary which his most intimate friends thought that he was hardly qualified to earn. It was certainly a fact that he went to Abchurch Lane, in the City, four or five days a week, and that he did not occupy his time in so unaccustomed a manner for nothing. Where the Duchess of Stevenage went all the world would go. And it became known at the last moment, that is to say only the day before the party, that a prince of the blood royal was to be there. How this had been achieved nobody quite understood; but there were rumours that a certain lady's jewels had been rescued from the pawnbroker's. Everything was done on the same scale. The Prime Minister had indeed declined to allow his name to appear on the list; but one Cabinet Minister and two or three under-secretaries had agreed to come because it was felt that the giver of the ball might before long be the master of

considerable parliamentary interest. It was believed that he had an eye to politics, and it is always wise to have great wealth on one's own side. There had at one time been much solicitude about the ball. Many anxious thoughts had been given. When great attempts fail, the failure is disastrous, and may be ruinous. But this ball had now been put beyond the chance of failure.

The giver of the ball was Augustus Melmotte, Esq., the father of the girl whom Sir Felix Carbury desired to marry, and the husband of the lady who was said to have been a Bohemian Jewess. It was thus that the gentleman chose to have himself designated, though within the last two years he had arrived in London from Paris, and had at first been known as M. Melmotte. But he had declared of himself that he had been born in England, and that he was an Englishman. He admitted that his wife was a foreigner,—an admission that was necessary as she spoke very little English. Melmotte himself spoke his "native" language fluently, but with an accent which betrayed at least a long expatriation. Miss Melmotte,—who a very short time since had been known as Mademoiselle Marie,—spoke English well, but as a foreigner. In regard to her it was acknowledged that she had been born out of England,—some said in New York; but Madame Melmotte, who must have known, had declared that the great event had taken place in Paris.

It was at any rate an established fact that Mr. Melmotte had made his wealth in France. He no doubt had had enormous dealings in other countries, as to which stories were told which must surely have been exaggerated. It was said that he had made a railway across Russia, that he provisioned the Southern army in the American civil war, that he had supplied Austria

with arms, and had at one time bought up all the iron in England. He could make or mar any company by buying or selling stock, and could make money dear or cheap as he pleased. All this was said of him in his praise,—but it was also said that he was regarded in Paris as the most gigantic swindler that had ever lived; that he had made that City too hot to hold him; that he had endeavoured to establish himself in Vienna, but had been warned away by the police; and that he had at length found that British freedom would alone allow him to enjoy, without persecution, the fruits of his industry. He was now established privately in Grosvenor Square and officially in Abchurch Lane; and it was known to all the world that a Royal Prince, a Cabinet Minister, and the very cream of duchesses were going to his wife's ball. All this had been done within twelve months.

There was but one child in the family, one heiress for all this wealth. Melmotte himself was a large man, with bushy whiskers and rough thick hair, with heavy eyebrows, and a wonderful look of power about his mouth and chin. This was so strong as to redeem his face from vulgarity; but the countenance and appearance of the man were on the whole unpleasant, and, I may say, untrustworthy. He looked as though he were purse-proud and a bully. She was fat and fair,—unlike in colour to our traditional Jewesses; but she had the Jewish nose and the Jewish contraction of the eyes. There was certainly very little in Madame Melmotte to recommend her, unless it was a readiness to spend money on any object that might be suggested to her by her new acquaintances. It sometimes seemed that she had a commission from her husband to give away presents to any who would accept them. The world had received the man as Augustus Melmotte, Esq. The world so ad-

dressed him on the very numerous letters which reached him, and so inscribed him among the directors of three dozen companies to which he belonged. But his wife was still Madame Melmotte. The daughter had been allowed to take her rank with an English title. She was now Miss Melmotte on all occasions.

Marie Melmotte had been accurately described by Felix Carbury to his mother. She was not beautiful, she was not clever, and she was not a saint. But then neither was she plain, nor stupid, nor, especially, a sinner. She was a little thing, hardly over twenty years of age, very unlike her father or mother, having no trace of the Jewess in her countenance, who seemed to be overwhelmed by the sense of her own position. With such people as the Melmottes things go fast, and it was very well known that Miss Melmotte had already had one lover who had been nearly accepted. The affair, however, had gone off. In this "going off" no one imputed to the young lady blame or even misfortune. It was not supposed that she had either jilted or been jilted. As in royal espousals interests of State regulate their expedience with an acknowledged absence, with even a proclaimed impossibility, of personal predilections, so in this case was money allowed to have the same weight. Such a marriage would or would not be sanctioned in accordance with great pecuniary arrangements. The young Lord Nidderdale, the eldest son of the Marquis of Auld Reekie, had offered to take the girl and make her Marchioness in the process of time for half a million down. Melmotte had not objected to the sum,—so it was said,—but had proposed to tie it up. Nidderdale had desired to have it free in his own grasp, and would not move on any other terms. Melmotte had been anxious to secure the Marquis,—very anxious to secure the Marchioness;

for at that time terms had not been made with the Duchess; but at last he had lost his temper, and had asked his lordship's lawyer whether it was likely that he would entrust such a sum of money to such a man. "You are willing to trust your only child to him," said the lawyer. Melmotte scowled at the man for a few seconds from under his bushy eyebrows; then told him that his answer had nothing in it, and marched out of the room. So that affair was over. I doubt whether Lord Nidderdale had ever said a word of love to Marie Melmotte,—or whether the poor girl had expected it. Her destiny had no doubt been explained to her.

Others had tried and had broken down somewhat in the same fashion. Each had treated the girl as an encumbrance he was to undertake,—at a very great price. But as affairs prospered with the Melmottes, as princes and duchesses were obtained by other means,—costly no doubt, but not so ruinously costly,—the immediate disposition of Marie became less necessary, and Melmotte reduced his offers. The girl herself, too, began to have an opinion. It was said that she had absolutely rejected Lord Grasslough, whose father indeed was in a state of bankruptcy, who had no income of his own, who was ugly, vicious, ill-tempered, and without any power of recommending himself to a girl. She had had experience since Lord Nidderdale, with a half laugh, had told her that he might just as well take her for his wife, and was now tempted from time to time to contemplate her own happiness and her own condition. People around were beginning to say that if Sir Felix Carbury managed his affairs well he might be the happy man.

There was considerable doubt whether Marie was the daughter of that Jewish-looking woman. Enquiries had been made, but not successfully, as to the date of the

Melmotte marriage. There was an idea abroad that Melmotte had got his first money with his wife, and had gotten it not very long ago. Then other people said that Marie was not his daughter at all. Altogether the mystery was rather pleasant as the money was certain. Of the certainty of the money in daily use there could be no doubt. There was the house. There was the furniture. There were the carriages, the horses, the servants with the livery coats and powdered heads, and the servants with the black coats and unpowdered heads. There were the gems, and the presents, and all the nice things that money can buy. There were two dinner parties every day, one at two o'clock called lunch, and the other at eight. The tradesmen had learned enough to be quite free of doubt, and in the City Mr. Melmotte's name was worth any money,—though his character was perhaps worth but little.

The large house on the south side of Grosvenor Square was all ablaze by ten o'clock. The broad verandah had been turned into a conservatory, had been covered in with boards contrived to look like trellis-work, was heated with hot air and filled with exotics at some fabulous price. A covered way had been made from the door, down across the pathway, to the road, and the police had, I fear, been bribed to frighten foot passengers into a belief that they were bound to go round. The house had been so arranged that it was impossible to know where you were, when once in it. The hall was a paradise. The staircase was fairyland. The lobbies were grottoes rich with ferns. Walls had been knocked away and arches had been constructed. The leads behind had been supported and walled in, and covered and carpeted. The ball had possession of the ground floor and first floor, and the house seemed

to be endless. "It's to cost sixty thousand pounds," said the Marchioness of Auld Reekie to her old friend the Countess of Mid-Lothian. The Marchioness had come in spite of her son's misfortune when she heard that the Duchess of Stevenage was to be there. "And worse spent money never was wasted," said the Countess. "By all accounts it was as badly come by," said the Marchioness. Then the two old noblewomen, one after the other, made graciously flattering speeches to the much-worn Bohemian Jewess, who was standing in fairy-land to receive her guests, almost fainting under the greatness of the occasion.

The three saloons on the first or drawing-room floor had been prepared for dancing, and here Marie was stationed. The Duchess had however undertaken to see that somebody should set the dancing going, and she had commissioned her nephew Miles Grendall, the young gentleman who now frequented the City, to give directions to the band and to make himself generally useful. Indeed there had sprung up a considerable intimacy between the Grendall family,—that is Lord Alfred's branch of the Grendalls,—and the Melmottes; which was as it should be, as each could give much and each receive much. It was known that Lord Alfred had not a shilling; but his brother was a duke and his sister was a duchess, and for the last thirty years there had been one continual anxiety for poor dear Alfred, who had tumbled into an unfortunate marriage without a shilling, had spent his own moderate patrimony, had three sons and three daughters, and had lived now for a very long time entirely on the unwilling contributions of his noble relatives. Melmotte could support the whole family in affluence without feeling the burden;—and why should he not? There had once been an idea that Miles should

attempt to win the heiress, but it had soon been found expedient to abandon it. Miles had no title, no position of his own, and was hardly big enough for the place. It was in all respects better that the waters of the fountain should be allowed to irrigate mildly the whole Grendall family;—and so Miles went into the city.

The ball was opened by a quadrille in which Lord Buntingford, the eldest son of the Duchess, stood up with Marie. Various arrangements had been made, and this among them. We may say that it had been part of a bargain. Lord Buntingford had objected mildly, being a young man devoted to business, fond of his own order, rather shy, and not given to dancing. But he had allowed his mother to prevail. "Of course they are vulgar," the Duchess had said,—"so much so as to be no longer distasteful because of the absurdity of the thing. I dare say he hasn't been very honest. When men make so much money, I don't know how they can have been honest. Of course it's done for a purpose. It's all very well saying that it isn't right, but what are we to do about Alfred's children? Miles is to have £500 a-year. And then he is always about the house. And between you and me they have got up those bills of Alfred's, and have said they can lie in their safe till it suits your uncle to pay them."

"They will lie there a long time," said Lord Buntingford.

"Of course they expect something in return; do dance with the girl once." Lord Buntingford disapproved—mildly, and did as his mother asked him.

The affair went off very well. There were three or four card-tables in one of the lower rooms, and at one of them sat Lord Alfred Grendall and Mr. Melmotte, with two or three other players, cutting in and out at the

end of each rubber. Playing whist was Lord Alfred's only accomplishment, and almost the only occupation of his life. He began it daily at his club at three o'clock, and continued playing till two in the morning with an interval of a couple of hours for his dinner. This he did during ten months of the year, and during the other two he frequented some watering-place at which whist prevailed. He did not gamble, never playing for more than the club stakes and bets. He gave to the matter his whole mind, and must have excelled those who were generally opposed to him. But so obdurate was fortune to Lord Alfred that he could not make money even of whist. Melmotte was very anxious to get into Lord Alfred's club,—The Peripatetics. It was pleasant to see the grace with which he lost his money, and the sweet intimacy with which he called his lordship Alfred. Lord Alfred had a remnant of feeling left, and would have liked to kick him. Though Melmotte was by far the bigger man, and was also the younger, Lord Alfred would not have lacked the pluck to kick him. Lord Alfred, in spite of his habitual idleness and vapid uselessness, had still left about him a dash of vigour, and sometimes thought that he would kick Melmotte and have done with it. But there were his poor boys, and those bills in Melmotte's safe. And then Melmotte lost his points so regularly, and paid his bets with such absolute good humour! "Come and have a glass of champagne, Alfred," Melmotte said, as the two cut out together. Lord Alfred liked champagne, and followed his host; but as he went he almost made up his mind that on some future day he would kick the man.

Late in the evening Marie Melmotte was waltzing with Felix Carbury, and Henrietta Carbury was then standing by talking to one Mr. Paul Montague. Lady

Carbury was also there. She was not well inclined either to balls or to such people as the Melmottes; nor was Henrietta. But Felix had suggested that, bearing in mind his prospects as to the heiress, they had better accept the invitation which he would cause to have sent to them. They did so; and then Paul Montague also got a card, not altogether to Lady Carbury's satisfaction. Lady Carbury was very gracious to Madame Melmotte for two minutes, and then slid into a chair expecting nothing but misery for the evening. She, however, was a woman who could do her duty and endure without complaint.

"It is the first great ball I ever was at in London," said Hetta Carbury to Paul Montague.

"And how do you like it?"

"Not at all. How should I like it? I know nobody here. I don't understand how it is that at these parties people do know each other, or whether they all go dancing about without knowing."

"Just that; I suppose when they are used to it they get introduced backwards and forwards, and then they can know each other as fast as they like. If you would wish to dance why won't you dance with me?"

"I have danced with you,—twice already."

"Is there any law against dancing three times?"

"But I don't especially want to dance," said Henrietta. "I think I'll go and console poor mamma, who has got nobody to speak to her," Just at this moment, however, Lady Carbury was not in that wretched condition, as an unexpected friend had come to her relief.

Sir Felix and Marie Melmotte had been spinning round and round throughout a long waltz, thoroughly enjoying the excitement of the music and the movement. To give Felix Carbury what little praise might be his

due, it is necessary to say that he did not lack physical activity. He would dance, and ride, and shoot eagerly, with an animation that made him happy for the moment. It was an affair not of thought or calculation, but of physical organisation. And Marie Melmotte had been thoroughly happy. She loved dancing with all her heart if she could only dance in a manner pleasant to herself. She had been warned especially as to some men,—that she should not dance with them. She had been almost thrown into Lord Nidderdale's arms, and had been prepared to take him at her father's bidding. But she had never had the slightest pleasure in his society, and had only not been wretched because she had not as yet recognised that she had an identity of her own in the disposition of which she herself should have a voice. She certainly had never cared to dance with Lord Nidderdale. Lord Grasslough she had absolutely hated, though at first she had hardly dared to say so. One or two others had been obnoxious to her in different ways, but they had passed on, or were passing on, out of her way. There was no one at the present moment whom she had been commanded by her father to accept should an offer be made. But she did like dancing with Sir Felix Carbury.

It was not only that the man was handsome but that he had a power of changing the expression of his countenance, a play of face, which belied altogether his real disposition. He could seem to be hearty and true till the moment came in which he had really to expose his heart,—or to try to expose it. Then he failed, knowing nothing about it. But in the approaches to intimacy with a girl he could be very successful. He had already nearly got beyond this with Marie Melmotte; but Marie was by no means quick in discovering

his deficiencies. To her he had seemed like a god. If she might be allowed to be wooed by Sir Felix Carbury, and to give herself to him, she thought that she would be contented.

"How well you dance," said Sir Felix, as soon as he had breath for speaking.

"Do I?" She spoke with a slightly foreign accent, which gave a little prettiness to her speech. "I was never told so. But nobody ever told me anything about myself."

"I should like to tell you everything about yourself, from the beginning to the end."

"Ah,—but you don't know."

"I would find out. I think I could make some good guesses. I'll tell you what you would like best in all the world."

"What is that?"

"Somebody that liked you best in all the world."

"Ah,—yes; if one knew who?"

"How can you know, Miss Melmotte, but by believing."

"That is not the way to know. If a girl told me that she liked me better than any other girl, I should not know it, just because she said so. I should have to find it out."

"And if a gentleman told you so?"

"I shouldn't believe him a bit, and I should not care to find out. But I should like to have some girl for a friend whom I could love, oh, ten times better than myself."

"So should I."

"Have you no particular friend?"

"I mean a girl whom I could love,—oh, ten times better than myself."

"Now you are laughing at me, Sir Felix," said Miss Melmotte.

"I wonder whether that will come to anything?" said Paul Montague to Miss Carbury. They had come back into the drawing-room, and had been watching the approaches to love-making which the baronet was opening.

"You mean Felix and Miss Melmotte. I hate to think of such things, Mr. Montague."

"It would be a magnificent chance for him."

"To marry a girl, the daughter of vulgar people, just because she will have a great deal of money? He can't care for her really,—because she is rich."

"But he wants money so dreadfully! It seems to me that there is no other condition of things under which Felix can face the world, but by being the husband of an heiress."

"What a dreadful thing to say!"

"But isn't it true? He has beggared himself."

"Oh, Mr. Montague."

"And he will beggar you and your mother."

"I don't care about myself."

"Others do though." As he said this he did not look at her, but spoke through his teeth, as if he were angry both with himself and her.

"I did not think you would have spoken so harshly of Felix."

"I don't speak harshly of him, Miss Carbury. I haven't said that it was his own fault. He seems to be one of those who have been born to spend money; and as this girl will have plenty of money to spend, I think it would be a good thing if he were to marry her. If Felix had £20,000 a year, everybody would think him the finest fellow in the world." In saying this, however

Mr. Paul Montague showed himself unfit to gauge the opinion of the world. Whether Sir Felix be rich or poor, the world, evil-hearted as it is, will never think him a fine fellow.

Lady Carbury had been seated for nearly half an hour in uncomplaining solitude under a bust, when she was delighted by the appearance of Mr. Frederick Alf. "You here?" she said.

"Why not? Melmotte and I are brother adventurers."

"I should have thought you would find so little here to amuse you."

"I have found you; and, in addition to that, duchesses and their daughters without number. They expect Prince George!"

"Do they?"

"And Legge Wilson from the India Office is here already. I spoke to him in some jewelled bower as I made my way here, not five minutes since. It's quite a success. Don't you think it very nice, Lady Carbury?"

"I don't know whether you are joking or in earnest."

"I never joke. I say it is very nice. These people are spending thousands upon thousands to gratify you and me and others, and all they want in return is a little countenance."

"Do you mean to give it them?"

"I am giving it them."

"Ah;—but the countenance of the 'Evening Pulpit.' Do you mean to give them that?"

"Well; it is not in our line exactly to give a catalogue of names and to record ladies' dresses. Perhaps it may be better for our host himself that he should be kept out of the newspapers."

"Are you going to be very severe upon poor me, Mr. Alf?" said the lady after a pause.

"We are never severe upon anybody, Lady Carbury. Here's the Prince. What will they do with him now they've caught him! Oh, they're going to make him dance with the heiress. Poor heiress!"

"Poor Prince!" said Lady Carbury.

"Not at all. She's a nice little girl enough, and he'll have nothing to trouble him. But how is she, poor thing, to talk to royal blood?"

Poor thing indeed! The Prince was brought into the big room where Marie was still being talked to by Felix Carbury, and was at once made to understand that she was to stand up and dance with royalty. The introduction was managed in a very business-like manner. Miles Grendall first came in and found the female victim; the Duchess followed with the male victim. Madame Melmotte, who had been on her legs till she was ready to sink, waddled behind, but was not allowed to take any part in the affair. The band were playing a galop, but that was stopped at once, to the great confusion of the dancers. In two minutes Miles Grendall had made up a set. He stood up with his aunt, the Duchess, as vis-à-vis to Marie and the Prince, till, about the middle of the quadrille, Legge Wilson was found and made to take his place. Lord Buntingford had gone away; but then there were still present two daughters of the Duchess who were rapidly caught. Sir Felix Carbury, being good-looking and having a name, was made to dance with one of them, and Lord Grasslough with the other. There were four other couples, all made up of titled people, as it was intended that this special dance should be chronicled, if not in the "Evening Pulpit," in some less serious daily journal. A paid re-

porter was present in the house ready to rush off with the list as soon as the dance should be a realized fact. The Prince himself did not quite understand why he was there, but they who marshalled his life for him had so marshalled it for the present moment. He himself probably knew nothing about the lady's diamonds which had been rescued, or the considerable subscription to St. George's Hospital which had been extracted from Mr. Melmotte as a make-weight. Poor Marie felt as though the burden of the hour would be greater than she could bear, and looked as though she would have fled had flight been possible. But the trouble passed quickly, and was not really severe. The Prince said a word or two between each figure, and did not seem to expect a reply. He made a few words go a long way, and was well trained in the work of easing the burden of his own greatness for those who were for the moment inflicted with it. When the dance was over he was allowed to escape after the ceremony of a single glass of champagne drank in the presence of the hostess. Considerable skill was shown in keeping the presence of his royal guest a secret from the host himself till the Prince was gone. Melmotte would have desired to pour out that glass of wine with his own hands, to solace his tongue by Royal Highnesses, and would probably have been troublesome and disagreeable. Miles Grendall had understood all this and had managed the affair very well. "Bless my soul;—his Royal Highness come and gone!" exclaimed Melmotte. "You and my father were so fast at your whist that it was impossible to get you away," said Miles. Melmotte was not a fool, and understood it all;—understood not only that it had been thought better that he should not speak to the Prince, but also that it might be better that it should be so.

He could not have everything at once. Miles Grendall was very useful to him, and he would not quarrel with Miles, at any rate as yet.

"Have another rubber, Alfred?" he said to Miles's father as the carriages were taking away the guests.

Lord Alfred had taken sundry glasses of champagne, and for a moment forgot the bills in the safe, and the good things which his boys were receiving. "Damn that kind of nonsense," he said. "Call people by their proper names." Then he left the house without a further word to the master of it. That night before they went to sleep Melmotte required from his weary wife an account of the ball, and especially of Marie's conduct. "Marie," Madame Melmotte said, "had behaved well, but had certainly preferred 'Sir Carbury' to any other of the young men." Hitherto Mr. Melmotte had heard very little of "Sir Carbury," except that he was a baronet. Though his eyes and ears were always open, though he attended to everything, and was a man of sharp intelligence, he did not yet quite understand the bearing and sequence of English titles. He knew that he must get for his daughter either an eldest son, or one absolutely in possession himself. Sir Felix, he had learned, was only a baronet; but then he was in possession. He had discovered also that Sir Felix's son would in course of time also become Sir Felix. He was not therefore at the present moment disposed to give any positive orders as to his daughter's conduct to the young baronet. He did not, however, conceive that the young baronet had as yet addressed his girl in such words as Felix had in truth used when they parted. "You know who it is," he whispered, "likes you better than any one else in the world."

"Nobody does;—don't, Sir Felix."

"I do," he said as he held her hand for a minute. He looked into her face and she thought it very sweet. He had studied the words as a lesson, and, repeating them as a lesson, he did it fairly well. He did it well enough at any rate to send the poor girl to bed with a sweet conviction that at last a man had spoken to her whom she could love.

CHAPTER V.

After the Ball.

"It's weary work," said Sir Felix as he got into the brougham with his mother and sister.

"What must it have been to me then, who had nothing to do?" said his mother.

"It's the having something to do that makes me call it weary work. By-the-bye, now I think of it, I'll run down to the club before I go home." So saying he put his head out of the brougham, and stopped the driver.

"It is two o'clock, Felix," said his mother.

"I'm afraid it is, but you see I'm hungry. You had supper, perhaps; I had none."

"Are you going down to the club for supper at this time in the morning?"

"I must go to bed hungry if I don't. Good night." Then he jumped out of the brougham, called a cab, and had himself driven to the Beargarden. He declared to himself that the men there would think it mean of him if he did not give them their revenge. He had renewed his play on the preceding night, and had again won. Dolly Longestaffe owed him now a considerable sum of money, and Lord Grasslough was also in his debt. He was sure that Grasslough would go to the club after the

ball, and he was determined that they should not think that he had submitted to be carried home by his mother and sister. So he argued with himself; but in truth the devil of gambling was hot within his bosom; and though he feared that in losing he might lose real money, and that if he won it would be long before he was paid, yet he could not keep himself from the card-table.

Neither mother nor daughter said a word till they reached home and had got up-stairs. Then the elder spoke of the trouble that was nearest to her heart at the moment. "Do you think he gambles?"

"He has got no money, mamma."

"I fear that might not hinder him. And he has money with him; though, for him and such friends as he has, it is not much. If he gambles everything is lost."

"I suppose they all do play,—more or less."

"I have not known that he played. I am wearied too, out of all heart, by his want of consideration to me. It is not that he will not obey me. A mother perhaps should not expect obedience from a grown-up son. But my word is nothing to him. He has no respect for me. He would as soon do what is wrong before me as before the merest stranger."

"He has been so long his own master, mamma."

"Yes,—his own master! And yet I must provide for him as though he were but a child. Hetta, you spent the whole evening talking to Paul Montague."

"No, mamma;—that is unjust."

"He was always with you."

"I knew nobody else. I could not tell him not to speak to me. I danced with him twice." Her mother was seated, with both her hands up to her forehead, and shook her head. "If you did not want me to speak to Paul you should not have taken me there."

"I don't wish to prevent your speaking to him. You know what I want." Henrietta came up and kissed her, and bade her good night. "I think I am the unhappiest woman in all London," she said, sobbing hysterically.

"Is it my fault, mamma?"

"You could save me from much if you would. I work like a horse, and I never spend a shilling that I can help. I want nothing for myself,—nothing for myself. Nobody has suffered as I have. But Felix never thinks of me for a moment."

"I think of you, mamma."

"If you did you would accept your cousin's offer. What right have you to refuse him? I believe it is all because of that young man."

"No, mamma; it is not because of that young man. I like my cousin very much;—but that is all. Good night, mamma." Lady Carbury just allowed herself to be kissed, and then was left alone.

At eight o'clock the next morning daybreak found four young men who had just risen from a card-table at the Beargarden. The Beargarden was so pleasant a club that there was no rule whatsoever as to its being closed, —the only law being that it should not be opened before three in the afternoon. A sort of sanction had, however, been given to the servants to demur to producing supper or drinks after six in the morning, so that, about eight, unrelieved tobacco began to be too heavy even for juvenile constitutions. The party consisted of Dolly Longestaffe, Lord Grasslough, Miles Grendall, and Felix Carbury, and the four had amused themselves during the last six hours with various innocent games. They had commenced with whist, and had culminated during the last half-hour with blind hookey. But during the

whole night Felix had won. Miles Grendall hated him, and there had been an expressed opinion between Miles and the young lord that it would be both profitable and proper to relieve Sir Felix of the winnings of the last two nights. The two men had played with the same object, and being young had shown their intention,—so that a certain feeling of hostility had been engendered. The reader is not to understand that either of them had cheated, or that the baronet had entertained any suspicion of foul play. But Felix had felt that Grendall and Grasslough were his enemies, and had thrown himself on Dolly for sympathy and friendship. Dolly, however, was very tipsy.

At eight o'clock in the morning there came a sort of settling, though no money then passed. The ready-money transactions had not lasted long through the night. Grasslough was the chief loser, and the figures and scraps of paper which had been passed over to Carbury, when counted up, amounted to nearly £2,000. His lordship contested the fact bitterly, but contested it in vain. There were his own initials and his own figures, and even Miles Grendall, who was supposed to be quite wide awake, could not reduce the amount. Then Grendall had lost over £400 to Carbury,—an amount, indeed, that mattered little, as Miles could, at present, as easily have raised £40,000. However, he gave his I.O.U to his opponent with an easy air. Grasslough, also, was impecunious; but he had a father,—also impecunious, indeed; but with them the matter would not be hopeless. Dolly Longestaffe was so tipsy that he could not even assist in making up his own account. That was to be left between him and Carbury for some future occasion.

"I suppose you'll be here to-morrow,—that is to-night," said Miles.

"Certainly,—only one thing," answered Felix.

"What one thing?"

"I think these things should be squared before we play any more!"

"What do you mean by that?" said Grasslough angrily. "Do you mean to hint anything?"

"I never hint anything, my Grassy," said Felix. "I believe when people play cards, it's intended to be ready-money, that's all. But I'm not going to stand on P's and Q's with you. I'll give you your revenge to-night."

"That's all right," said Miles.

"I was speaking to Lord Grasslough," said Felix. "He is an old friend, and we know each other. You have been rather rough to-night, Mr. Grendall."

"Rough;—what the devil do you mean by that?"

"And I think it will be as well that our account should be settled before we begin again."

"A settlement once a week is the kind of thing I'm used to," said Grendall.

There was nothing more said; but the young men did not part on good terms. Felix, as he got himself taken home, calculated that if he could realize his spoil, he might begin the campaign again with horses, servants, and all luxuries as before. If all were paid, he would have over £3,000!

CHAPTER VI.

Roger Carbury and Paul Montague.

ROGER CARBURY, of Carbury Hall, the owner of a small property in Suffolk, was the head of the Carbury family. The Carburys had been in Suffolk a great many years,—certainly from the time of the War of the Roses,—and had always held up their heads. But they had never held them very high. It was not known that any had risen ever to the honour of knighthood before Sir Patrick, going higher than that, had been made a baronet. They had, however, been true to their acres and their acres true to them through the perils of civil wars, Reformation, Commonwealth, and Revolution, and the head Carbury of the day had always owned, and had always lived at, Carbury Hall. At the beginning of the present century the squire of Carbury had been a considerable man, if not in his county, at any rate in his part of the county. The income of the estate had sufficed to enable him to live plenteously and hospitably, to drink port wine, to ride a stout hunter, and to keep an old lumbering coach for his wife's use when she went avisiting. He had an old butler who had never lived anywhere else, and a boy from the village who was in a way apprenticed to the butler. There was a cook, not too proud to wash up her own dishes, and a couple of young women;—while the house was kept by Mrs. Carbury herself, who marked and gave out her own linen, made her own preserves, and looked to the curing of her own hams. In the year 1800 the Carbury property was sufficient for the Carbury house. Since that time the Carbury property has considerably increased in value, and

the rents have been raised. Even the acreage has been extended by the enclosure of commons. But the income is no longer comfortably adequate to the wants of an English gentleman's household. If a moderate estate in land be left to a man now, there arises the question whether he is not damaged unless an income also be left to him wherewith to keep up the estate. Land is a luxury, and of all luxuries is the most costly. Now the Carburys never had anything but land. Suffolk has not been made rich and great either by coal or iron. No great town had sprung up on the confines of the Carbury property. No eldest son had gone into trade or risen high in a profession so as to add to the Carbury wealth. No great heiress had been married. There had been no ruin,—no misfortune. But in the days of which we write the Squire of Carbury Hall had become a poor man simply through the wealth of others. His estate was supposed to bring him in £2000 a year. Had he been content to let the Manor House, to live abroad, and to have an agent at home to deal with the tenants, he would undoubtedly have had enough to live luxuriously. But he lived on his own land among his own people, as all the Carburys before him had done, and was poor because he was surrounded by rich neighbours. The Longestaffes of Caversham,—of which family Dolly Longestaffe was the eldest son and hope,—had the name of great wealth, but the founder of the family had been a Lord Mayor of London and a chandler as lately as in the reign of Queen Anne. The Hepworths, who could boast good blood enough on their own side, had married into new money. The Primeros,—though the good-nature of the country folk had accorded to the head of them the title of Squire Primero,—had been trading Spaniards fifty years ago, and had

bought the Bundlesham property from a great duke. The estates of those three gentlemen, with the domain of the Bishop of Elmham, lay all around the Carbury property, and in regard to wealth enabled their owners altogether to overshadow our squire. The superior wealth of a bishop was nothing to him. He desired that bishops should be rich, and was among those who thought that the country had been injured when the territorial possessions of our prelates had been converted into stipends by Act of Parliament. But the grandeur of the Longestaffes and the too apparent wealth of the Primeros did oppress him, though he was a man who would never breathe a word of such oppression into the ear even of his dearest friend. It was his opinion,—which he did not care to declare loudly, but which was fully understood to be his opinion by those with whom he lived intimately,—that a man's standing in the world should not depend at all upon his wealth. The Primeros were undoubtedly beneath him in the social scale, although the young Primeros had three horses apiece, and killed legions of pheasants annually at about 10*s.* a head. Hepworth of Eardly was a very good fellow, who gave himself no airs and understood his duties as a country gentleman; but he could not be more than on a par with Carbury of Carbury, though he was supposed to enjoy £7000 a year. The Longestaffes were altogether oppressive. Their footmen, even in the country, had powdered hair. They had a house in town,—a house of their own,—and lived altogether as magnates. The lady was Lady Pomona Longestaffe. The daughters, who certainly were handsome, had been destined to marry peers. The only son, Dolly, had, or had had, a fortune of his own. They were an oppressive people in a country neighbourhood. And to make the matter

worse, rich as they were, they never were able to pay anybody anything that they owed. They continued to live with all the appurtenances of wealth. The girls always had horses to ride, both in town and country. The acquaintance of Dolly the reader has already made. Dolly, who certainly was a poor creature though good-natured, had energy in one direction. He would quarrel perseveringly with his father, who only had a life interest in the estate. The house at Caversham Park was during six or seven months of the year full of servants, if not of guests, and all the tradesmen in the little towns around, Bungay, Beccles, and Harlestone, were aware that the Longestaffes were the great people of that country. Though occasionally much distressed for money, they would always execute the Longestaffe orders with submissive punctuality, because there was an idea that the Longestaffe property was sound at the bottom. And, then, the owner of a property so managed cannot scrutinise bills very closely.

Carbury of Carbury had never owed a shilling that he could not pay, or his father before him. His orders to the tradesmen at Beccles were not extensive, and care was used to see that the goods supplied were neither overcharged nor unnecessary. The tradesmen, consequently, of Beccles did not care much for Carbury of Carbury;—though perhaps one or two of the elders among them entertained some ancient reverence for the family. Roger Carbury, Esq., was Carbury of Carbury,—a distinction of itself, which, from its nature, could not belong to the Longestaffes and Primeros, which did not even belong to the Hepworths of Eardly. The very parish in which Carbury Hall stood,—or Carbury Manor House, as it was more properly called,—was Carbury parish. And there was Carbury Chase, partly in Car-

bury parish and partly in Bundlesham,—but belonging, unfortunately, in its entirety to the Bundlesham estate.

Roger Carbury himself was all alone in the world. His nearest relatives of the name were Sir Felix and Henrietta, but they were no more than second cousins. He had sisters, but they had long since been married and had gone away into the world with their husbands, one to India, and another to the far west of the United States. At present he was not much short of forty years of age, and was still unmarried. He was a stout, good-looking man, with a firmly set square face, with features finely cut, a small mouth, good teeth, and well-formed chin. His hair was red, curling round his head, which was now partly bald at the top. He wore no other beard than small, almost unnoticeable whiskers. His eyes were small, but bright, and very cheery when his humour was good. He was about five feet nine in height, having the appearance of great strength and perfect health. A more manly man to the eye was never seen. And he was one with whom you would instinctively wish at first sight to be on good terms,—partly because in looking at him there would come on you an unconscious conviction that he would be very stout in holding his own against his opponents; partly also from a conviction equally strong, that he would be very pleasant to his friends.

When Sir Patrick had come home from India as an invalid, Roger Carbury had hurried up to see him in London, and had proffered him all kindness. Would Sir Patrick and his wife and children like to go down to the old place in the country? Sir Patrick did not care a straw for the old place in the country, and so told his cousin in almost those very words. There had not, therefore, been much friendship during Sir Patrick's life.

But when the violent ill-conditioned old man was dead, Roger paid a second visit, and again offered hospitality to the widow and her daughter,—and to the young baronet. The young baronet had just joined his regiment and did not care to visit his cousin in Suffolk; but Lady Carbury and Henrietta had spent a month there, and everything had been done to make them happy. The effort as regarded Henrietta had been altogether successful. As regarded the widow, it must be acknowledged that Carbury Hall had not quite suited her tastes. She had already begun to sigh for the glories of a literary career. A career of some kind,—sufficient to repay her for the sufferings of her early life,—she certainly desired. "Dear cousin Roger," as she called him, had not seemed to her to have much power of assisting her in these views. She was a woman who did not care much for country charms. She had endeavoured to get up some mild excitement with the bishop, but the bishop had been too plain spoken and sincere for her. The Primeros had been odious; the Hepworths stupid; the Longestaffes,—she had endeavoured to make up a little friendship with Lady Pomona,—insufferably supercilious. She had declared to Henrietta "that Carbury Hall was very dull."

But then there had come a circumstance which altogether changed her opinions as to Carbury Hall, and its proprietor. The proprietor after a few weeks followed them up to London, and made a most matter-of-fact offer to the mother for the daughter's hand. He was at that time thirty-six, and Henrietta was not yet twenty. He was very cool;—some might have thought him phlegmatic in his love-making. Henrietta declared to her mother that she had not in the least expected it. But he was very urgent, and very persistent. Lady Car-

bury was eager on his side. Though the Carbury Manor House did not exactly suit her, it would do admirably for Henrietta. And as for age, to her thinking, she being then over forty, a man of thirty-six was young enough for any girl. But Henrietta had an opinion of her own. She liked her cousin, but did not love him. She was amazed, and even annoyed by the offer. She had praised him and praised the house so loudly to her mother,—having in her innocence never dreamed of such a proposition as this,—so that now she found it difficult to give an adequate reason for her refusal. Yes;—she had undoubtedly said that her cousin was charming, but she had not meant charming in that way. She did refuse the offer very plainly, but still with some apparent lack of persistency. When Roger suggested that she should take a few months to think of it, and her mother supported Roger's suggestion, she could say nothing stronger than that she was afraid that thinking about it would not do any good. Their first visit to Carbury had been made in September. In the following February she went there again,—much against the grain as far as her own wishes were concerned; and when there had been cold, constrained, almost dumb in the presence of her cousin. Before they left the offer was renewed, but Henrietta declared that she could not do as they would have her. She could give no reason, only she did not love her cousin in that way. But Roger declared that he by no means intended to abandon his suit. In truth he verily loved the girl, and love with him was a serious thing. All this happened a full year before the beginning of our present story.

But something else happened also. While that second visit was being made at Carbury there came to the hall a young man of whom Roger Carbury had said

much to his cousins,—one Paul Montague, of whom some short account shall be given in this chapter. The squire,—Roger Carbury was always called the squire about his own place,—had anticipated no evil when he so timed this second visit of his cousins to his house that they must of necessity meet Paul Montague there. But great harm had come of it. Paul Montague had fallen into love with his cousin's guest, and there had sprung up much unhappiness.

Lady Carbury and Henrietta had been nearly a month at Carbury, and Paul Montague had been there barely a week, when Roger Carbury thus spoke to the guest who had last arrived. "I've got to tell you something, Paul."

"Anything serious?"

"Very serious to me. I may say so serious that nothing in my own life can approach it in importance." He had unconsciously assumed that look, which his friend so thoroughly understood, indicating his resolve to hold to what he believed to be his own, and to fight if fighting be necessary. Montague knew him well, and became half aware that he had done something, he knew not what, militating against this serious resolve of his friend. He looked up, but said nothing. "I have offered my hand in marriage to my cousin Henrietta," said Roger very gravely.

"Miss Carbury?"

"Yes; to Henrietta Carbury. She has not accepted it. She has refused me twice. But I still have hopes of success. Perhaps I have no right to hope, but I do. I tell it you just as it is. Everything in life to me depends upon it. I think I may count upon your sympathy."

"Why did you not tell me before?" said Paul Montague in a hoarse voice.

Then there had come a sudden and rapid interchange of quick speaking between the men, each of them speaking the truth exactly, each of them declaring himself to be in the right and to be ill-used by the other, each of them equally hot, equally generous, and equally unreasonable. Montague at once asserted that he also loved Henrietta Carbury. He blurted out his assurance in the baldest and most incomplete manner, but still in such words as to leave no doubt. No;—he had not said a word to her. He had intended to consult Roger Carbury himself,—should have done so in a day or two,—perhaps on that very day had not Roger spoken to him. "You have neither of you a shilling in the world," said Roger; "and now you know what my feelings are you must abandon it." Then Montague declared that he had a right to speak to Miss Carbury. He did not suppose that Miss Carbury cared a straw about him. He had not the least reason to think that she did. It was altogether impossible. But he had a right to his chance. That chance was all the world to him. As to money,—he would not admit that he was a pauper, and, moreover, he might earn an income as well as other men. Had Carbury told him that the young lady had shown the slightest intention to receive his, Carbury's, addresses, he, Paul, would at once have disappeared from the scene. But as it was not so, he would not say that he would abandon his hope.

The scene lasted for above an hour. When it was ended, Paul Montague packed up all his clothes and was driven away to the railway station by Roger himself, without seeing either of the ladies. There had been very hot words between the men, but the last words which Roger spoke to the other on the railway platform were not quarrelsome in their nature. "God bless you, old

fellow," he said, pressing Paul's hands. Paul's eyes were full of tears, and he replied only by returning the pressure.

Paul Montague's father and mother had long been dead. The father had been a barrister in London, having perhaps some small fortune of his own. He had, at any rate, left to this son, who was one among others, a sufficiency with which to begin the world. Paul when he had come of age had found himself possessed of about £6,000. He was then at Oxford, and was intended for the bar. An uncle of his, a younger brother of his father, had married a Carbury, the younger sister of two, though older than her brother Roger. This uncle many years since had taken his wife out to California, and had there become an American. He had a large tract of land, growing wool, and wheat, and fruit; but whether he prospered or whether he did not, had not always been plain to the Montagues and Carburys at home. The intercourse between the two families had, in the quite early days of Paul Montague's life, created an affection between him and Roger, who, as will be understood by those who have carefully followed the above family history, were not in any degree related to each other. Roger, when quite a young man, had had the charge of the boy's education, and had sent him to Oxford. But the Oxford scheme, to be followed by the bar, and to end on some one of the many judicial benches of the country, had not succeeded. Paul had got into a "row" at Balliol, and had been rusticated,—had then got into another row, and was sent down. Indeed he had a talent for rows,—though, as Roger Carbury always declared, there was nothing really wrong about any of them. Paul was then twenty-one, and he took himself and his money out to California, and joined his uncle. He had perhaps an

idea,—based on very insufficient grounds,—that rows are popular in California. At the end of three years he found that he did not like farming life in California,—and he found also that he did not like his uncle. So he returned to England, but on returning was altogether unable to get his £6,000 out of the Californian farm. Indeed he had been compelled to come away without any of it, with funds insufficient even to take him home, accepting with much dissatisfaction an assurance from his uncle that an income amounting to ten per cent. upon his capital should be remitted to him with the regularity of clockwork. The clock alluded to must have been one of Sam Slick's. It had gone very badly. At the end of the first quarter there came the proper remittance;—then half the amount;—then there was a long interval without anything; then some dropping payments now and again;—and then a twelvemonth without anything. At the end of that twelvemonth he paid a second visit to California, having borrowed money from Roger for his journey. He had now again returned, with some little cash in hand, and with the additional security of a deed executed in his favour by one Hamilton K. Fisker, who had gone into partnership with his uncle, and who had added a vast flour-mill to his uncle's concerns. In accordance with this deed he was to get twelve per cent. on his capital, and had enjoyed the gratification of seeing his name put up as one of the firm, which now stood as Fisker, Montague, and Montague. A business declared by the two elder partners to be most promising had been opened at Fiskerville, about two hundred and fifty miles from San Francisco, and the hearts of Fisker and the elder Montague were very high. Paul hated Fisker horribly, did not love his uncle much, and would willingly have got back his £6,000 had he been able. But he was not able,

and returned as one of Fisker, Montague, and Montague, not altogether unhappy, as he had succeeded in obtaining enough of his back income to pay what he owed to Roger, and to live for a few months. He was intent on considering how he should bestow himself, consulting daily with Roger on the subject, when suddenly Roger had perceived that the young man was becoming attached to the girl whom he himself loved. What then occurred has been told.

Not a word was said to Lady Carbury or her daughter of the real cause of Paul's sudden disappearance. It had been necessary that he should go to London. Each of the ladies probably guessed something of the truth, but neither spoke a word to the other on the subject. Before they left the Manor the squire again pleaded his cause with Henrietta, but he pleaded it in vain. Henrietta was colder than ever,—but she made use of one unfortunate phrase which destroyed all the effect which her coldness might have had. She said that she was too young to think of marrying yet. She had meant to imply that the difference in their ages was too great, but had not known how to say it. It was easy to tell her that in a twelvemonth she would be older;—but it was impossible to convince her that any number of twelvemonths would alter the disparity between her and her cousin. But even that disparity was not now her strongest reason for feeling sure that she could not marry Roger Carbury.

Within a week of the departure of Lady Carbury from the Manor House, Paul Montague returned, and returned as a still dear friend. He had promised before he went that he would not see Henrietta again for three months, but he would promise nothing further. "If she won't take you, there is no reason why I shouldn't try." That had been his argument. Roger would not accede

to the justice even of this. It seemed to him that Paul was bound to retire altogether, partly because he had got no income, partly because of Roger's previous claim,—partly no doubt in gratitude, but of this last reason Roger never said a word. If Paul did not see this himself, Paul was not such a man as his friend had taken him to be.

Paul did see it himself, and had many scruples. But why should his friend be a dog in the manger? He would yield at once to Roger Carbury's older claims if Roger could make anything of them. Indeed he could have no chance if the girl were disposed to take Roger for her husband. Roger had all the advantage of Carbury Manor at his back, whereas he had nothing but his share in the doubtful business of Fisker, Montague, and Montague, in a wretched little town 250 miles further off than San Francisco! But if, with all this, Roger could not prevail, why should he not try? What Roger said about want of money was mere nonsense. Paul was sure that his friend would have created no such difficulty had not he himself been interested. Paul declared to himself that he had money, though doubtful money, and that he certainly would not give up Henrietta on that score.

He came up to London at various times in search of certain employment which had been half promised him, and, after the expiration of the three months, constantly saw Lady Carbury and her daughter. But from time to time he had given renewed promises to Roger Carbury that he would not declare his passion,—now for two months, then for six weeks, then for a month. In the meantime the two men were fast friends,—so fast that Montague spent by far the greater part of his time as his friend's guest,—and all this was done with the understanding that Roger Carbury was to blaze up into

hostile wrath should Paul ever receive the privilege to call himself Henrietta Carbury's favoured lover, but that everything was to be smooth between them should Henrietta be persuaded to become the mistress of Carbury Hall. So things went on up to the night at which Montague met Henrietta at Madame Melmotte's ball. The reader should also be informed that there had been already a former love affair in the young life of Paul Montague. There had been, and indeed there still was, a widow, one Mrs. Hurtle, whom he had been desperately anxious to marry before his second journey to California;—but the marriage had been prevented by the interference of Roger Carbury.

CHAPTER VII.

Mentor.

Lady Carbury's desire for a union between Roger and her daughter was greatly increased by her solicitude in respect to her son. Since Roger's offer had first been made, Felix had gone on from bad to worse, till his condition had become one of hopeless embarrassment. If her daughter could but be settled in the world, Lady Carbury said to herself, she could then devote herself to the interests of her son. She had no very clear idea of what that devotion would be. But she did know that she had paid so much money for him, and would have so much more extracted from her, that it might well come to pass that she would be unable to keep a home for her daughter. In all these troubles she constantly appealed to Roger Carbury for advice,—which, however, she never followed. He recommended her to give up her house in town, to find a home for her daughter

sewhere, and also for Felix if he would consent to llow her. Should he not so consent, then let the oung man bear the brunt of his own misdoings. Doubtss, when he could no longer get bread in London he ould find her out. Roger was always severe when he oke of the baronet,—or seemed to Lady Carbury to e severe.

But, in truth, she did not ask for advice in order at she might follow it. She had plans in her head ith which she knew that Roger would not sympathise. he still thought that Sir Felix might bloom and burst ut into grandeur, wealth, and fashion, as the husband f a great heiress, and in spite of her son's vices, was roud of him in that anticipation. When he succeeded obtaining from her money, as in the case of that 20,—when, with brazen-faced indifference to her remonrances, he started off to his club at two in the morng, when with impudent drollery he almost boasted of e hopelessness of his debts, a sickness of heart would me upon her, and she would weep hysterically, and the whole night without sleeping. But could he arry Miss Melmotte, and thus conquer all his troubles means of his own personal beauty,—then she would proud of all that had passed. With such a condition mind Roger Carbury could have no sympathy. To m it seemed that a gentleman was disgraced who owed oney to a tradesman which he could not pay. And dy Carbury's heart was high with other hopes,—in ite of her hysterics and her fears. The "Criminal ueens" might be a great literary success. She almost ought that it would be a success. Messrs. Leadham d Loiter, the publishers, were civil to her. Mr. Broune d promised. Mr. Booker had said that he would see at could be done. She had gathered from Mr. Alf's

caustic and cautious words that the book would be noticed in the "Evening Pulpit." No;—she would not take dear Roger's advice as to leaving London. But she would continue to ask Roger's advice. Men like to have their advice asked. And, if possible, she would arrange the marriage. What country retirement could be so suitable for a Lady Carbury when she wished to retire for awhile,—as Carbury Manor, the seat of her own daughter? And then her mind would fly away into regions of bliss. If only by the end of this season Henrietta could be engaged to her cousin, Felix be the husband of the richest bride in Europe, and she be the acknowledged author of the cleverest book of the year, what a Paradise of triumph might still be open to her after all her troubles! Then the sanguine nature of the woman would bear her up almost to exultation, and for an hour she would be happy, in spite of everything.

A few days after the ball Roger Carbury was up in town, and was closeted with her in her back drawing-room. The declared cause of his coming was the condition of the baronet's affairs and the indispensable necessity,—so Roger thought,—of taking some steps by which at any rate the young man's present expenses might be brought to an end. It was horrible to him that a man who had not a shilling in the world or any prospect of a shilling, who had nothing and never thought of earning anything, should have hunters! He was very much in earnest about it, and quite prepared to speak his mind to the young man himself,—if he could get hold of him. "Where is he now, Lady Carbury;—at this moment?"

"I think he's out with the Baron." Being "out with the Baron" meant that the young man was hunting with the stag hounds some forty miles away from London.

"How does he manage it? Whose horses does he ride? Who pays for them?"

"Don't be angry with me, Roger. What can I do to prevent it?"

"I think you should refuse to have anything to do with him while he continues in such courses."

"My own son!"

"Yes;—exactly. But what is to be the end of it? Is he to be allowed to ruin you, and Hetta? It can't go on long."

"You wouldn't have me throw him over."

"I think he is throwing you over. And then it is so thoroughly dishonest,—so ungentlemanlike! I don't understand how it goes on from day to day. I suppose you don't supply him with ready money."

"He has had a little."

Roger frowned angrily. "I can understand that you should provide him with bed and food, but not that you should pander to his vices by giving him money." This was very plain speaking, and Lady Carbury winced under it. "The kind of life that he is leading requires a large income of itself. I understand the thing, and know that with all I have in the world I could not do it myself."

"You are so different."

"I am older of course,—very much older. But he is not so young that he should not begin to comprehend. Has he any money beyond what you give him?"

Then Lady Carbury revealed certain suspicions which she had begun to entertain during the last day or two. "I think he has been playing."

"That is the way to lose money,—not to get it," said Roger.

"I suppose somebody wins,—sometimes."

"They who win are the sharpers. They who lose are

the dupes. I would sooner that he were a fool than a knave."

"O Roger, you are so severe!"

"You say he plays. How would he pay, were he to lose?"

"I know nothing about it. I don't even know that he does play; but I have reason to think that during the last week he has had money at his command. Indeed I have seen it. He comes home at all manner of hours and sleeps late. Yesterday I went into his room about ten and did not wake him. There were notes and gold lying on his table;—ever so much."

"Why did you not take them?"

"What; rob my own boy?"

"When you tell me that you are absolutely in want of money to pay your own bills, and that he has not hesitated to take yours from you! Why does he not repay you what he has borrowed?"

"Ah, indeed;—why not? He ought to if he has it. And there were papers, there;—I. O. U's, signed by other men."

"You looked at them."

"I saw as much as that. It is not that I am curious, but one does feel about one's own son. I think he has bought another horse. A groom came here and said something about it to the servants."

"Oh dear;—oh dear!"

"If you could only induce him to stop the gambling! Of course it is very bad whether he wins or loses,—though I am sure that Felix would do nothing unfair. Nobody ever said that of him. If he has won money, it would be a great comfort if he would let me have some of it,—for, to tell the truth, I hardly know how to

turn. I am sure nobody can say that I spend it on myself."

Then Roger again repeated his advice. There could be no use in attempting to keep up the present kind of life in Welbeck Street. Welbeck Street might be very well without a penniless spendthrift such as Sir Felix, but must be ruinous under the present conditions. If Lady Carbury felt, as no doubt she did feel, bound to afford a home to her ruined son in spite of all his wickedness and folly, that home should be found far away from London. If he chose to remain in London, let him do so on his own resources. The young man should make up his mind to do something for himself. A career might possibly be opened for him in India. "If he be a man he would sooner break stones than live on you," said Roger. Yes, he would see his cousin to-morrow and speak to him;—that is if he could possibly find him. "Young men who gamble all night, and hunt all day are not easily found." But he would come at twelve as Felix generally breakfasted at that hour. Then he gave an assurance to Lady Carbury which to her was not the least comfortable part of the interview. In the event of her son not giving her the money which she at once required he, Roger, would lend her a hundred pounds till her half year's income should be due. After that his voice changed altogether, as he asked a question on another subject, "Can I see Henrietta to-morrow?"

"Certainly;—why not? She is at home now, I think."

"I will wait till to-morrow,—when I call to see Felix. I should like her to know that I am coming. Paul Montague was in town the other day. He was here, I suppose?"

"Yes;—he called."

"Was that all you saw of him?"

"He was at the Melmottes' ball. Felix got a card for him;—and we were there. Has he gone down to Carbury?"

"No;—not to Carbury. I think he had some business about his partners at Liverpool. There is another case of a young man without anything to do. Not that Paul is at all like Sir Felix." This he was induced to say by the spirit of honesty which was always strong within him.

"Don't to be too hard upon poor Felix," said Lady Carbury. Roger, as he took his leave, thought that it would be impossible to be too hard upon Sir Felix Carbury.

The next morning Lady Carbury was in her son's bedroom before he was up, and with incredible weakness told him that his cousin Roger was coming to lecture him. "What the Devil's the use of it?" said Felix from beneath the bedclothes.

"If you speak to me in that way, Felix, I must leave the room."

"But what is the use of his coming to me? I know what he has got to say just as if it were said. It's all very well preaching sermons to good people, but nothing ever was got by preaching to people who ain't good."

"Why shouldn't you be good?"

"I shall do very well, mother, if that fellow will leave me alone. I can play my hand better than he can play it for me. If you'll go now I'll get up." She had intended to ask him for some of the money which she believed he still possessed, but her courage failed her. If she asked for his money, and took it, she would in some fashion recognise and tacitly approve his gambling. It was not yet eleven, and it was early for him to leave his bed; but he had resolved that he would get out of the

house before that horrible bore should be upon him with his sermon. To do this he must be energetic. He was actually eating his breakfast at half-past eleven, and had already contrived in his mind how he would turn the wrong way as soon as he got into the street,—towards Marylebone Road by which route Roger would certainly not come. He left the house at ten minutes before twelve, cunningly turned away, dodging round by the first corner,—and just as he had turned it encountered his cousin. Roger, anxious in regard to his errand, with time at his command, had come before the hour appointed and had strolled about, thinking not of Felix but of Felix's sister. The baronet felt that he had been caught, —caught unfairly, but by no means abandoned all hope of escape. "I was going to your mother's house on purpose to see you," said Roger.

"Were you indeed? I am so sorry. I have an engagement out here with a fellow which I must keep. I could meet you at any other time, you know."

"You can come back for ten minutes," said Roger, taking him by the arm.

"Well;—not conveniently at this moment."

"You must manage it. I am here at your mother's request, and can't afford to remain in town day after day looking for you. I go down to Carbury this afternoon. Your friend can wait. Come along." His firmness was too much for Felix, who lacked the courage to shake his cousin off violently, and to go his way. But as he returned he fortified himself with the remembrance of all the money in his pocket,—for he still had his winnings, —remembered too certain sweet words which had passed between him and Marie Melmotte since the ball, and resolved that he would not be "sat upon" by Roger Carbury. The time was coming,—he might almost say

that the time had come,—in which he might defy Roger Carbury. Nevertheless, he dreaded the words which were now to be spoken to him with a craven fear.

"Your mother tells me," said Roger, "that you still keep hunters."

"I don't know what she calls hunters. I have one that I didn't part with when the others went."

"You have only one horse?"

"Well;—if you want to be exact, I have a hack as well as the horse I ride."

"And another up here in town?"

"Who told you that? No; I haven't. At least there is one staying at some stables which has been sent for me to look at."

"Who pays for all these horses?"

"At any rate I shall not ask you to pay for them."

"No;—you would be afraid to do that. But you have no scruple in asking your mother, though you should force her to come to me or to other friends for assistance. You have squandered every shilling of your own, and now you are ruining her."

"That isn't true. I have money of my own."

"Where did you get it?"

"This is all very well, Roger; but I don't know that you have any right to ask me these questions. I have money. If I buy a horse I can pay for it. If I keep one or two I can pay for them. Of course I owe a lot of money, but other people owe me money too. I'm all right, and you needn't frighten yourself."

"Then why do you beg her last shilling from your mother, and when you have money not pay it back to her?"

"She can have the twenty pounds, if you mean that."

"I mean that, and a good deal more than that. I suppose you have been gambling."

"I don't know that I am bound to answer your questions, and I won't do it. If you have nothing else to say, I'll go about my own business."

"I have something else to say, and I mean to say it." Felix had walked towards the door, but Roger was before him, and now leaned his back against it.

"I am not going to be kept here against my will," said Felix.

"You have to listen to me, so you may as well sit still. Do you wish to be looked upon as a blackguard by all the world?"

"Oh,—go on."

"That is what it will be. You have spent every shilling of your own,—and because your mother is affectionate and weak, you are now spending all that she has, and are bringing her and your sister to beggary."

"I don't ask them to pay anything for me."

"Not when you borrow her money?"

"There is the £20. Take it and give it her," said Felix, counting the notes out of the pocket-book. "When I asked her for it, I did not think she would make such a row about such a trifle." Roger took up the notes and thrust them into his pocket. "Now, have you done?" said Felix.

"Not quite. Do you purpose that your mother should keep you and clothe you for the rest of your life?"

"I hope to be able to keep her before long, and to do it much better than it has ever been done before. The truth is, Roger, you know nothing about it. If you'll leave me to myself, you'll find that I shall do very well."

"I don't know any young man who ever did worse, or one who had less moral conception of what is right and wrong."

"Very well. That's your idea. I differ from you. People can't all think alike, you know. Now, if you please, I'll go."

Roger felt that he hadn't half said what he had to say, but he hardly knew how to get it said. And of what use could it be to talk to a young man who was altogether callous and without feeling? The remedy for the evil ought to be found in the mother's conduct rather than the son's. She, were she not foolishly weak, would make up her mind to divide herself utterly from her son, at any rate for a while, and to leave him to suffer utter penury. That would bring him round. And then when the agony of want had tamed him, he would be content to take bread and meat from her hand and would be humble. At present he had money in his pocket, and would eat and drink of the best, and be free from inconvenience for the moment. While this prosperity remained it would be impossible to touch him. "You will ruin your sister, and break your mother's heart," said Roger, firing a last harmless shot after the young reprobate.

When Lady Carbury came into the room, which she did as soon as the front door was closed behind her son, she seemed to think that a great success had been achieved because the £20 had been recovered. "I knew he would give it me back, if he had it," she said.

"Why did he not bring it to you of his own accord?"

"I suppose he did not like to talk about it. Has he said that he got it by—playing?"

"No,—he did not speak a word of truth while he

ras here. You may take it for granted that he did get t by gambling. How else should he have it? And you nay take it for granted also that he will lose all that he as got. He talked in the wildest way,—saying that he ould soon have a home for you and Hetta."

"Did he;—dear boy!"

"Had he any meaning?"

"Oh; yes. And it is quite on the cards that it should e so. You have heard of Miss Melmotte."

"I have heard of the great French swindler who has ome over here, and who is buying his way into so- iety."

"Everybody visits them now, Roger."

"More shame for everybody. Who knows anything bout him,—except that he left Paris with the reputation f a specially prosperous rogue? But what of him?"

"Some people think that Felix will marry his only hild. Felix is handsome; isn't he? What young man is here nearly so handsome? They say she'll have half a illion of money."

"That's his game;—is it?"

"Don't you think he is right?"

"No; I think he's wrong. But we shall hardly agree ith each other about that. Can I see Henrietta for a w minutes?"

CHAPTER VIII.

Love-Sick.

ROGER CARBURY said well that it was very improbable that he and his cousin, the widow, should agree in their opinions as to the expedience of fortune-hunting by marriage. It was impossible that they should ever understand each other. To Lady Carbury the prospect of a union between her son and Miss Melmotte was one of unmixed joy and triumph. Could it have been possible that Marie Melmotte should be rich and her father be a man doomed to a deserved sentence in a penal settlement, there might perhaps be a doubt about it. The wealth even in that case would certainly carry the day against the disgrace, and Lady Carbury would find reasons why "poor Marie" should not be punished for her father's sins, even while enjoying the money which those sins had produced. But how different were the existing facts? Mr. Melmotte was not at the galleys, but was entertaining duchesses in Grosvenor Square. People said that Mr. Melmotte had a reputation throughout Europe as a gigantic swindler,—as one who in the dishonest and successful pursuit of wealth had stopped at nothing. People said of him that he had framed and carried out long premeditated and deeply laid schemes for the ruin of those who had trusted him, that he had swallowed up the property of all who had come in contact with him, that he was fed with the blood of widows and children; —but what was all this to Lady Carbury? If the duchesses condoned it all, did it become her to be prudish? People also said that Melmotte would yet get a fall,—that a man who had risen after such a fashion never could long

keep his head up. But he might keep his head up long enough to give Marie her fortune. And then Felix wanted a fortune so badly;—was so exactly the young man who ought to marry a fortune! To Lady Carbury there was no second way of looking at the matter.

And to Roger Carbury also there was no second way of looking at it. That condonation of antecedents which, in the hurry of the world, is often vouchsafed to success, that growing feeling which induces people to assert to themselves that they are not bound to go outside the general verdict, and that they may shake hands with whomsoever the world shakes hands with, had never reached him. The old-fashioned idea that the touching of pitch will defile still prevailed with him. He was a gentleman;—and would have felt himself disgraced to enter the house of such a one as Augustus Melmotte. Not all the duchesses in the peerage, or all the money in the city, could alter his notions or induce him to modify his conduct. But he knew that it would be useless for him to explain this to Lady Carbury. He trusted, however, that one of the family might be taught to appreciate the difference between honour and dishonour. Henrietta Carbury had, he thought, a higher turn of mind than her mother, and had as yet been kept free from soil. As for Felix,—he had so grovelled in the gutters as to be dirt all over. Nothing short of the prolonged sufferings of half a life could cleanse him.

He found Henrietta alone in the drawing-room. "Have you seen Felix?" she said, as soon as they had greeted each other.

"Yes. I caught him in the street."

"We are so unhappy about him."

"I cannot say but that you have reason. I think, you know, that your mother indulges him foolishly."

"Poor mamma! She worships the very ground he treads on."

"Even a mother should not throw her worship away like that. The fact is that your brother will ruin you both if this goes on."

"What can mamma do?"

"Leave London, and then refuse to pay a shilling on his behalf."

"What would Felix do in the country?"

"If he did nothing, how much better would that be than what he does in town? You would not like him to become a professional gambler."

"Oh, Mr. Carbury; you do not mean that he does that!"

"It seems cruel to say such things to you,—but in a matter of such importance one is bound to speak the truth. I have no influence over your mother; but you may have some. She asks my advice, but has not the slightest idea of listening to it. I don't blame her for that; but I am anxious for the sake of——, for the sake of the family."

"I am sure you are."

"Especially for your sake. You will never throw him over."

"You would not ask me to throw him over."

"But he may drag you into the mud. For his sake you have already been taken into the house of that man Melmotte."

"I do not think that I shall be injured by anything of that kind," said Henrietta, drawing herself up.

"Pardon me if I seem to interfere."

"Oh, no;—it is no interference from you."

"Pardon me then if I am rough. To me it seems that an injury is done to you if you are made to go to

the house of such a one as this man. Why does your mother seek his society? Not because she likes him; not because she has any sympathy with him or his family;—but simply because there is a rich daughter."

"Everybody goes there, Mr. Carbury."

"Yes,—that is the excuse which everybody makes. Is that sufficient reason for you to go to a man's house? Is there not another place to which we are told that a great many are going, simply because the road has become thronged and fashionable? Have you no feeling that you ought to choose your friends for certain reasons of your own? I admit there is one reason here. They have a great deal of money, and it is thought possible that he may get some of it by falsely swearing to a girl that he loves her. After what you have heard, are the Melmottes people with whom you would wish to be connected?"

"I don't know."

"I do. I know very well. They are absolutely disgraceful. A social connection with the first crossing-sweeper would be less objectionable." He spoke with a degree of energy of which he was himself altogether unaware. He knit his brows, and his eyes flashed, and his nostrils were extended. Of course she thought of his own offer to herself. Of course her mind at once conceived,—not that the Melmotte connection could ever really affect him, for she felt sure that she would never accept his offer,—but that he might think that he would be so affected. Of course she resented the feeling which she thus attributed to him. But, in truth, he was much too simple-minded for any such complex idea. "Felix," he continued, "has already descended so far that I cannot pretend to be anxious as to what houses he may

frequent. But I should be sorry to think that you should often be seen at Mr. Melmotte's."

"I think, Mr. Carbury, that mamma will take care that I am not taken where I ought not to be taken."

"I wish you to have some opinion of your own as to what is proper for you."

"I hope I have. I am sorry you should think that I have not."

"I am old-fashioned, Hetta."

"And we belong to a newer and worse sort of world. I dare say it is so. You have been always very kind, but I almost doubt whether you can change us now. I have sometimes thought that you and mamma were hardly fit for each other."

"I have thought that you and I were,—or possibly might be fit for each other."

"Oh,—as for me, I shall always take mamma's side. If mamma chooses to go to the Melmottes I shall certainly go with her. If that is contamination, I suppose I must be contaminated. I don't see why I'm to consider myself better than any one else."

"I have always thought that you were better than any one else."

"That was before I went to the Melmottes. I am sure you have altered your opinion now. Indeed, you have told me so. I am afraid, Mr. Carbury, you must go your way, and we must go ours."

He looked into her face as she spoke, and gradually began to perceive the working of her mind. He was so true himself that he did not understand that there should be with her even that violet-coloured tinge of prevarication which women assume as an additional charm. Could she really have thought that he was attending to his own

possible future interests when he warned her as to the making of new acquaintances?

"For myself," he said, putting out his hand and making a slight vain effort to get hold of hers, "I have only one wish in the world; and that is, to travel the same road with you. I do not say that you ought to wish it too; but you ought to know that I am sincere. When I spoke of the Melmottes, did you believe that I was thinking of myself?"

"Oh no;—how should I?"

"I was speaking to you then as to a cousin who might regard me as an elder brother. No contact with legions of Melmottes could make you other to me than the woman on whom my heart has settled. Even were you in truth disgraced,—could disgrace touch one so pure as you,—it would be the same. I love you so well that I have already taken you for better or for worse. I cannot change. My nature is too stubborn for such changes. Have you a word to say to comfort me?" She turned away her head, but did not answer him at once. "Do you understand how much I am in need of comfort?"

"You can do very well without comfort from me."

"No, indeed. I shall live, no doubt; but I shall not do very well. As it is, I am not doing at all well. I am becoming sour and moody, and ill at ease with my friends. I would have you believe me, at any rate, when I say I love you."

"I suppose you mean something."

"I mean a great deal, dear. I mean all that a man can mean. That is it. You hardly understand that I am serious to the extent of ecstatic joy on the one side, and utter indifference to the world on the other. I shall

never give it up till I learn that you are to be married to some one else."

"What can I say, Mr. Carbury?"

"That you will love me."

"But if I don't."

"Say that you will try."

"No; I will not say that. Love should come without a struggle. I don't know how one person is to try to love another in that way. I like you very much; but being married is such a terrible thing."

"It would not be terrible to me, dear."

"Yes;—when you found that I was too young for your tastes."

"I shall persevere, you know. Will you assure me of this,—that if you promise your hand to another man you will let me know at once?"

"I suppose I may promise that," she said, after pausing for a moment.

"There is no one as yet?"

"There is no one. But, Mr. Carbury, you have no right to question me. I don't think it generous. I allow you to say things that nobody else could say because you are a cousin and because mamma trusts you so much. No one but mamma has a right to ask me whether I care for any one."

"Are you angry with me?"

"No."

"If I have offended you it is because I love you so dearly."

"I am not offended, but I don't like to be questioned by a gentleman. I don't think any girl would like it. I am not to tell everybody all that happens."

"Perhaps when you reflect how much of my happiness depends upon it you will forgive me. Good-by

now." She put out her hand to him and allowed it to remain in his for a moment. "When I walk about the old shrubberies at Carbury where we used to be together, I am always asking myself what chance there is of your walking there as the mistress."

"There is no chance."

"I am, of course, prepared to hear you say so. Well; good-bye, and may God bless you."

The man had no poetry about him. He did not even care for romance. All the outside belongings of love which are so pleasant to many men and which to many women afford the one sweetness in life which they really relish, were nothing to him. There are both men and women to whom even the delays and disappointments of love are charming, even when they exist to the detriment of hope. It is sweet to such persons to be melancholy, sweet to pine, sweet to feel that they are now wretched after a romantic fashion as have been those heroes and heroines of whose sufferings they have read in poetry. But there was nothing of this with Roger Carbury. He had, as he believed, found the woman that he really wanted, who was worthy of his love, and now, having fixed his heart upon her, he longed for her with an amazing longing. He had spoken the simple truth when he declared that life had become indifferent to him without her. No man in England could be less likely to throw himself off the Monument or to blow out his brains. But he felt numbed in all the joints of his mind by this sorrow. He could not make one thing bear upon another, so as to console himself after any fashion. There was but one thing for him;—to persevere till he got her, or till he had finally lost her. And should the latter be his fate, as he began to fear that it would be, then, he would live, but live only, like a crippled man.

He felt almost sure in his heart of hearts that the girl loved that other, younger man. That she had never owned to such love he was quite sure. The man himself and Henrietta also had both assured him on this point, and he was a man easily satisfied by words and prone to believe. But he knew that Paul Montague was attached to her, and that it was Paul's intention to cling to his love. Sorrowfully looking forward through the vista of future years, he thought he saw that Henrietta would become Paul's wife. Were it so, what should he do? Annihilate himself as far as all personal happiness in the world was concerned, and look solely to their happiness, their prosperity, and their joys? Be as it were a beneficent old fairy to them, though the agony of his own disappointment should never depart from him? Should he do this, and be blessed by them,—or should he let Paul Montague know what deep resentment such ingratitude could produce? When had a father been kinder to a son, or a brother to a brother, than he had been to Paul? His home had been the young man's home, and his purse the young man's purse. What right could the young man have to come upon him just as he was perfecting his bliss and rob him of all that he had in the world? He was conscious all the while that there was a something wrong in his argument,—that Paul when he commenced to love the girl knew nothing of his friend's love,—that the girl, though Paul had never come in the way, might probably have been as obdurate as she was now to his entreaties. He knew all this because his mind was clear. But yet the injustice,—at any rate, the misery was so great, that to forgive it and to reward it would be weak, womanly, and foolish. Roger Carbury did not quite believe in the forgiveness of injuries. If you pardon all the evil done to you, you encourage

others to do you evil! If you give your cloak to him who steals your coat, how long will it be before your shirt and trousers will go also? Roger Carbury returned that afternoon to Suffolk, and as he thought of it all throughout the journey, he resolved that he would never forgive Paul Montague if Paul Montague should become his cousin's husband.

CHAPTER IX.

The great Railway to Vera Cruz.

"You have been a guest in his house. Then, I guess, the thing's about as good as done." These words were spoken with a fine, sharp, nasal twang by a brilliantly-dressed American gentleman in one of the smartest private rooms of the great railway hotel at Liverpool, and they were addressed to a young Englishman who was sitting opposite to him. Between them there was a table covered with maps, schedules, and printed programmes. The American was smoking a very large cigar, which he kept constantly turning in his mouth, and half of which was inside his teeth. The Englishman had a short pipe. Mr. Hamilton K. Fisker, of the firm of Fisker, Montague, and Montague, was the American, and the Englishman was our friend Paul, the junior member of that firm.

"But I didn't even speak to him," said Paul.

"In commercial affairs that matters nothing. It quite justifies you in introducing me. We are not going to ask your friend to do us a favour. We don't want to borrow money."

"I thought you did."

"If he'll go in for the thing he'd be one of us, and there would be no borrowing then. He'll join us if he's

as clever as they say, because he'll see his way to making a couple of million of dollars out of it. If he'd take the trouble to run over and show himself in San Francisco, he'd make double that. The moneyed men would go in with him at once, because they know that he understands the game and has got the pluck. A man who has done what he has by financing in Europe,—by George! there's no limit to what he might do with us. We're a bigger people than any of you and have more room. We go after bigger things, and don't stand shilly-shally on the brink as you do. But Melmotte pretty nigh beats the best among us. Anyway he should come and try his luck, and he couldn't have a bigger thing or a safer thing than this. He'd see it immediately if I could talk to him for half an hour."

"Mr. Fisker," said Paul mysteriously, "as we are partners, I think I ought to let you know that many people speak very badly of Mr. Melmotte's honesty."

Mr. Fisker smiled gently, turned his cigar twice round in his mouth, and then closed one eye. "There is always a want of charity," he said, "when a man is successful."

The scheme in question was the grand proposal for a South Central Pacific and Mexican railway, which was to run from the Salt Lake City, thus branching off from the San Francisco and Chicago line,—and pass down through the fertile lands of New Mexico and Arizona, into the territory of the Mexican Republic, run by the city of Mexico, and come out on the gulf at the port of Vera Cruz. Mr. Fisker admitted at once that it was a great undertaking, acknowledged that the distance might be perhaps something over 2,000 miles, acknowledged that no computation had or perhaps could be made as to the probable cost of the railway; but seemed to think

that questions such as these were beside the mark and childish. Melmotte, if he would go into the matter at all, would ask no such questions.

But we must go back a little. Paul Montague had received a telegram from his partner, Hamilton K. Fisker, sent on shore at Queenstown from one of the New York liners, requesting him to meet Fisker at Liverpool immediately. With this request he had felt himself bound to comply. Personally he had disliked Fisker,—and perhaps not the less so because when in California he had never found himself able to resist the man's good humour, audacity, and cleverness combined. He had found himself talked into agreeing with any project which Mr. Fisker might have in hand. It was altogether against the grain with him, and yet by his own consent, that the flour-mill had been opened at Fiskerville. He trembled for his money and never wished to see Fisker again; but still, when Fisker came to England, he was proud to remember that Fisker was his partner, and he obeyed the order and went down to Liverpool.

If the flour-mill had frightened him, what must the present project have done! Fisker explained that he had come with two objects,—first to ask the consent of the English partner to the proposed change in their business, and secondly to obtain the co-operation of English capitalists. The proposed change in the business meant simply the entire sale of the establishment at Fiskerville, and the absorption of the whole capital in the work of getting up the railway. "If you could realise all the money it wouldn't make a mile of the railway," said Paul. Mr. Fisker laughed at him. The object of Fisker, Montague, and Montague was not to make a railway to Vera Cruz, but to float a company. Paul thought that Mr. Fisker seemed to be indifferent whether the railway

should ever be constructed or not. It was clearly his idea that fortunes were to be made out of the concern before a spadeful of earth had been moved. If brilliantly printed programmes might avail anything, with gorgeous maps, and beautiful little pictures of trains running into tunnels beneath snowy mountains and coming out of them on the margin of sunlit lakes, Mr. Fisker had certainly done much. But Paul, when he saw all these pretty things, could not keep his mind from thinking whence had come the money to pay for them. Mr. Fisker had declared that he had come over to obtain his partner's consent, but it seemed to that partner that a great deal had been done without any consent. And Paul's fears on this hand were not allayed by finding that on all these beautiful papers he himself was described as one of the agents and general managers of the company. Each document was signed Fisker, Montague, and Montague. References on all matters were to be made to Fisker, Montague and Montague,—and in one of the documents it was stated that a member of the firm had proceeded to London with the view of attending to British interests in the matter. Fisker had seemed to think that his young partner would express unbounded satisfaction at the greatness which was thus falling upon him. A certain feeling of importance, not altogether unpleasant, was produced, but at the same time there was another conviction forced upon Montague's mind, not altogether pleasant, that his money was being made to disappear without any consent given by him, and that it behoved him to be cautious lest such consent should be extracted from him unawares.

"What has become of the mill?" he asked.

"We have put an agent into it."

"Is not that dangerous? What check have you on him?"

"He pays us a fixed sum, sir. But, my word! when there is such a thing as this on hand a trumpery mill like that is not worth speaking of."

"You haven't sold it?"

"Well;—no. But we've arranged a price for a sale."

"You haven't taken the money for it?"

"Well;—yes; we have. We've raised money on it, you know. You see you weren't there, and so the two resident partners acted for the firm. But Mr. Montague, you'd better go with us. You had indeed."

"And about my own income?"

"That's a flea-bite. When we've got a little ahead with this it won't matter, sir, whether you spend twenty thousand or forty thousand dollars a year. We've got the concession from the United States Government through the territories, and we're in correspondence with the President of the Mexican Republic. I've no doubt we've an office open already in Mexico and another at Vera Cruz."

"Where's the money to come from?"

"Money to come from, sir? Where do you suppose the money comes from in all these undertakings? If we can float the shares, the money'll come in quick enough. We hold three million dollars of the stock ourselves."

"Six hundred thousand pounds!" said Montague.

"We take them at par, of course,—and as we sell we shall pay for them. But of course we shall only sell at a premium. If we can run them up even to 110, there would be three hundred thousand dollars. But we'll do better than that. I must try and see Melmotte at once. You had better write a letter now."

"I don't know the man."

"Never mind. Look here—I'll write it, and you can sign it." Whereupon Mr. Fisker did write the following letter:—

"Langham Hotel, London. March 4, 18—.

"DEAR SIR,—I have the pleasure of informing you that my partner, Mr. Fisker,—of Fisker, Montague, and Montague, of San Francisco,—is now in London with the view of allowing British capitalists to assist in carrying out perhaps the greatest work of the age,—namely, the South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway, which is to give direct communication between San Francisco and the Gulf of Mexico. He is very anxious to see you upon his arrival, as he is aware that your co-operation would be desirable. We feel assured that with your matured judgment in such matters you would see at once the magnificence of the enterprise. If you will name a day and an hour, Mr. Fisker will call upon you.

"I have to thank you and Madame Melmotte for a very pleasant evening spent at your house last week.

"Mr. Fisker proposes returning to New York. I shall remain here, superintending the British interests which may be involved.

"I have the honour to be,
"Dear Sir,
"Most faithfully yours,
"——— ———."

"But I have never said that I would superintend the interests," said Montague.

"You can say so now. It binds you to nothing. You regular John Bull Englishmen are so full of scruples that you lose as much of life as should serve to make an additional fortune."

After some further conversation Paul Montague re-copied the letter and signed it. He did it with doubt;—almost with dismay. But he told himself that he could do no good by refusing. If this wretched American with his hat on one side and rings on his fingers, had so far got the upper hand of Paul's uncle as to have been allowed to do what he liked with the funds of the partnership, Paul could not stop it. On the following morning they went up to London together, and in the course of the afternoon Mr. Fisker presented himself in Abchurch Lane. The letter written at Liverpool, but dated from the Langham Hotel, had been posted at the Euston Square Railway Station at the moment of Fisker's arrival. Fisker sent in his card, and was asked to wait. In the course of twenty minutes he was ushered into the great man's presence by no less a person than Miles Grendall.

It has been already said that Mr. Melmotte was a big man with large whiskers, rough hair, and with an expression of mental power on a harsh vulgar face. He was certainly a man to repel you by his presence unless attracted to him by some internal consideration. He was magnificent in his expenditure, powerful in his doings, successful in his business, and the world around him therefore was not repelled. Fisker, on the other hand, was a shining little man,—perhaps about forty years of age, with a well-twisted moustache, greasy brown hair, which was becoming bald at the top, good-looking if his features were analysed, but insignificant in appearance. He was gorgeously dressed, with a silk waistcoat and chains, and he carried a little stick. One would at first be inclined to say that Fisker was not much of a man; but after a little conversation most men would own that there was something in Fisker. He was troubled by no shyness, by no scruples, and by no fears. His mind was

not capacious, but such as it was it was his own, and he knew how to use it.

Abchurch Lane is not a grand site for the offices of a merchant prince. Here, at a small corner house, there was a small brass plate on a swing door, bearing the words "Melmotte & Co." Of whom the Co. was composed no one knew. In one sense Mr. Melmotte might be said to be in company with all the commercial world, for there was no business to which he would refuse his co-operation on certain terms. But he had never burthened himself with a partner in the usual sense of the term. Here Fisker found three or four clerks seated at desks, and was desired to walk up-stairs. The steps were narrow and crooked, and the rooms were small and irregular. Here he stayed for a while in a small dark apartment in which "The Daily Telegraph" was left for the amusement of its occupant till Miles Grendall announced to him that Mr. Melmotte would see him. The millionaire looked at him for a moment or two, just condescending to touch with his fingers the hand which Fisker had projected.

"I don't seem to remember," he said, "the gentleman who has done me the honour of writing to me about you."

"I dare say not, Mr. Melmotte. When I'm at home in San Francisco, I make acquaintance with a great many gents whom I don't remember afterwards. My partner I think told me that he went to your house with his friend, Sir Felix Carbury."

"I know a young man called Sir Felix Carbury."

"That's it. I could have got any amount of introductions to you if I had thought this would not have sufficed." Mr. Melmotte bowed. "Our account here in London is kept with the City and West End Joint Stock

But I have only just arrived, and as my chief object in coming to London is to see you, and as I met my partner, Mr. Montague, in Liverpool, I took a note from him and came on straight."

"And what can I do for you, Mr. Fisker?"

Then Mr. Fisker began his account of the Great South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway, and exhibited considerable skill by telling it all in comparatively few words. And yet he was gorgeous and florid. In two minutes he had displayed his programme, his maps, and his pictures before Mr. Melmotte's eyes, taking care that Mr. Melmotte should see how often the names of Fisker, Montague, and Montague, reappeared upon them. As Mr. Melmotte read the documents, Fisker from time to time put in a word. But the words had no reference at all to the future profits of the railway, or to the benefit which such means of communication would confer upon the world at large; but applied solely to the appetite for such stock as theirs, which might certainly be produced in the speculating world by a proper manipulation of the affairs.

"You seem to think you couldn't get it taken up in your own country," said Melmotte.

"There's not a doubt about getting it all taken up there. Our folk, sir, are quick enough at the game; but you don't want me to teach you, Mr. Melmotte, that nothing encourages this kind of thing like competition. When they hear at St. Louis and Chicago that the thing is alive in London, they'll be alive there. And it's the same here, Sir. When they know that the stock is running like wildfire in America, they'll make it run here too."

"How far have you got?"

"What we've gone to work upon is a concession for

making the line from the United States Congress. We're to have the land for nothing, of course, and a grant of one thousand acres round every station, the stations to be twenty-five miles apart."

"And the land is to be made over to you,—when?"

"When we have made the line up to the station." Fisker understood perfectly that Mr. Melmotte did not ask the question in reference to any value that he might attach to the possession of such lands, but to the attractiveness of such a prospectus in the eyes of the outside world of speculators.

"And what do you want me to do, Mr. Fisker?"

"I want to have your name there," he said. And he placed his finger down on a spot on which it was indicated that there was, or was to be, a chairman of an English Board of Directors, but with a space for the name, hitherto blank.

"Who are to be your directors here, Mr. Fisker?"

"We should ask you to choose them, sir. Mr. Paul Montague should be one, and perhaps his friend Sir Felix Carbury might be another. We could get probably one of the Directors of the City and West End. But we would leave it all to you,—as also the amount of stock you would like to take yourself. If you gave yourself to it, heart and soul, Mr. Melmotte, it would be the finest thing that there has been out for a long time. There would be such a mass of stock!"

"You have to back that with a certain amount of paid-up capital?"

"We take care, sir, in the West not to cripple commerce too closely by old-fashioned bandages. Look at what we've done already, sir, by having our limbs pretty free. Look at our line, sir, right across the continent, from San Francisco to New York. Look at——"

"Never mind that, Mr. Fisker. People wanted to go from New York to San Francisco, and I don't know that they do want to go to Vera Cruz. But I will look at it, and you shall hear from me." The interview was over, and Mr. Fisker was contented with it. Had Mr. Melmotte not intended at least to think of it he would not have given ten minutes to the subject. After all, what was wanted from Mr. Melmotte was little more than his name, for the use of which Mr. Fisker proposed that he should receive from the speculative public two or three hundred thousand pounds.

At the end of a fortnight from the date of Mr. Fisker's arrival in London, the company was fully launched in England, with a body of London directors, of whom Mr. Melmotte was the chairman. Among the directors were Lord Alfred Grendall, Sir Felix Carbury, Samuel Cohenlupe, Esq., Member of Parliament for Staines, a gentleman of the Jewish persuasion, Lord Nidderdale, who was also in Parliament, and Mr. Paul Montague. It may be thought that the directory was not strong, and that but little help could be given to any commercial enterprise by the assistance of Lord Alfred or Sir Felix;—but it was felt that Mr. Melmotte was himself so great a tower of strength that the fortune of the company,—as a company,—was made.

Just about here much in The Times, e.g., re Jay Gould the jail, Fisk, etc. + Melmotte was his parallel in whose The railway speculator who went bankrupt for millions

CHAPTER X.

Mr. Fisker's Success.

Mr. Fisker was fully satisfied with the progress he had made, but he never quite succeeded in reconciling Paul Montague to the whole transaction. Mr. Melmotte was indeed so great a reality, such a fact in the commercial world of London, that it was no longer possible for such a one as Montague to refuse to believe in the scheme. Melmotte had the telegraph at his command, and had been able to make as close inquiries as though San Francisco and Salt Lake City had been suburbs of London. He was chairman of the British branch of the Company, and had had shares allocated to him,—or as he said to the house,—to the extent of two millions of dollars. But still there was a feeling of doubt, and a consciousness that Melmotte, though a tower of strength, was thought by many to have been built upon the sands.

Paul had now of course given his full authority to the work, much in opposition to the advice of his old friend Roger Carbury,—and had come up to live in town, that he might personally attend to the affairs of the great railway. There was an office just behind the Exchange, with two or three clerks and a secretary, the latter position being held by Miles Grendall, Esq. Paul, who had a conscience in the matter and was keenly alive to the fact that he was not only a director but was also one of the firm of Fisker, Montague, and Montague which was responsible for the whole affair, was grievously anxious to be really at work, and would attend most inopportunely at the Company's offices. Fisker, who still lingered in London, did his best to put a stop to this

folly, and on more than one occasion somewhat snubbed his partner. "My dear fellow, what's the use of your flurrying yourself? In a thing of this kind, when it has once been set agoing, there is nothing else to do. You may have to work your fingers off before you can make it move, and then fail. But all that has been done for you. If you go there on the Thursdays that's quite as much as you need do. You don't suppose that such a man as Melmotte would put up with any real interference." Paul endeavoured to assert himself, declaring that as one of the managers he meant to take a part in the management;—that his fortune, such as it was, had been embarked in the matter, and was as important to him as was Mr. Melmotte's fortune to Mr. Melmotte. But Fisker got the better of him and put him down. "Fortune! what Fortune had either of us? a few beggarly thousands of dollars not worth talking of, and barely sufficient to enable a man to look at an enterprise. And now where are you? look here, sir;—there's more to be got out of the smashing up of such an affair as this, if it should smash up, than could be made by years of hard work out of such fortunes as yours and mine in the regular way of trade."

Paul Montague certainly did not love Mr. Fisker personally, nor did he relish his commercial doctrines; but he allowed himself to be carried away by them. "When and how was I to have helped myself?" he wrote to Roger Carbury. "The money had been raised and spent before this man came here at all. It's all very well to say that he had no right to do it; but he had done it. I couldn't even have gone to law with him without going over to California, and then I should have got no redress." Through it all he disliked Fisker, and yet Fisker had one great merit which certainly recommended

itself warmly to Montague's appreciation. Though he denied the propriety of Paul's interference in the business, he quite acknowledged Paul's right to a share in the existing dash of prosperity. As to the real facts of the money affairs of the firm he would tell Paul nothing. But he was well provided with money himself, and took care that his partner should be in the same position. He paid him all the arrears of his stipulated income up to the present moment, and put him nominally into possession of a large number of shares in the railway,—with, however, an understanding that he was not to sell them till they had reached ten per cent. above par, and that in any sale transacted he was to touch no other money than the amount of profit which would thus accrue. What Melmotte was to be allowed to do with his shares, he never heard. As far as Montague could understand, Melmotte was in truth to be powerful over everything. All this made the young man unhappy, restless, and extravagant. He was living in London and had money at command, but he never could rid himself of the fear that the whole affair might tumble to pieces beneath his feet and that he might be stigmatised as one among a gang of swindlers.

We all know how, in such circumstances, by far the greater proportion of a man's life will be given up to the enjoyments that are offered to him and the lesser proportion to the cares, sacrifices, and sorrows. Had this young director been describing to his intimate friend the condition in which he found himself, he would have declared himself to be distracted by doubts, suspicions, and fears till his life was a burden to him. And yet they who were living with him at this time found him to be a very pleasant fellow, fond of amusement, and disposed to make the most of all the good things which

came in his way. Under the auspices of Sir Felix Carbury he had become a member of the Beargarden, at which best of all possible clubs the mode of entrance was as irregular as its other proceedings. When any young man desired to come in who was thought to be unfit for its style of living, it was shown to him that it would take three years before his name could be brought up at the usual rate of vacancies; but in regard to desirable companions the committee had a power of putting them at the top of the list of candidates and bringing them in at once. Paul Montague had suddenly become credited with considerable commercial wealth and greater commercial influence. He sat at the same Board with Melmotte and Melmotte's men; and was on this account elected at the Beargarden without any of that harassing delay to which other less fortunate candidates are subjected.

And,—let it be said with regret, for Paul Montague was at heart honest and well-conditioned,—he took to living a good deal at the Beargarden. A man must dine somewhere, and everybody knows that a man dines cheaper at his club than elsewhere. It was thus he reasoned with himself. But Paul's dinners at the Beargarden were not cheap. He saw a good deal of his brother directors, Sir Felix Carbury and Lord Nidderdale, entertained Lord Alfred more than once at the club, and had twice dined with his great chairman amidst all the magnificence of merchant-princely hospitality in Grosvenor Square. It had indeed been suggested to him by Mr. Fisker that he also ought to enter himself for the great Marie-Melmotte plate. Lord Nidderdale had again declared his intention of running, owing to considerable pressure put upon him by certain interested tradesmen, and with this intention had become one of the directors of the Mexican Railway Company. At the time, how-

ever, of which we are now writing, Sir Felix was the favourite for the race among fashionable circles generally.

The middle of April had come, and Fisker was still in London. When millions of dollars are at stake,—belonging perhaps to widows and orphans, as Fisker remarked,—a man was forced to set his own convenience on one side. But this devotion was not left without reward, for Mr. Fisker had "a good time" in London. He also was made free of the Beargarden, as an honorary member, and he also spent a good deal of money. But there is this comfort in great affairs, that whatever you spend on yourself can be no more than a trifle. Champagne and ginger-beer are all the same when you stand to win or lose thousands—with this only difference, that champagne may have deteriorating results which the more innocent beverage will not produce. The feeling that the greatness of these operations relieved them from the necessity of looking to small expenses operated in the champagne direction, both on Fisker and Montague, and the result was deleterious. The Beargarden, no doubt, was a more lively place than Carbury Manor, but Montague found that he could not wake up on these London mornings with thoughts as satisfactory as those which attended his pillow at the old Manor House.

On Saturday, the 19th of April, Fisker was to leave London on his return to New York, and on the 18th a farewell dinner was to be given to him at the club. Mr. Melmotte was asked to meet him, and on such an occasion all the resources of the club were to be brought forth. Lord Alfred Grendall was also to be a guest, and Mr. Cohenlupe, who went about a good deal with Melmotte. Nidderdale, Carbury, Montague, and Miles Grendall were members of the club, and gave the dinner. No expense was spared. Herr Vossner purveyed the viands

and wines,—and paid for them. Lord Nidderdale took the chair, with Fisker on his right hand, and Melmotte on his left, and, for a fast-going young lord, was supposed to have done the thing well. There were only two toasts drunk, to the healths of Mr. Melmotte and Mr. Fisker, and two speeches were of course made by them. Mr. Melmotte may have been held to have clearly proved the genuineness of that English birth which he claimed by the awkwardness and incapacity which he showed on the occasion. He stood with his hands on the table and with his face turned to his plate blurted out his assurance that the floating of this railway company would be one of the greatest and most successful commercial operations ever conducted on either side of the Atlantic. It was a great thing,—a very great thing;—he had no hesitation in saying that it was one of the greatest things out. He didn't believe a greater thing had ever come out. He was happy to give his humble assistance to the furtherance of so great a thing,—and so on. These assertions, not varying much one from the other, he jerked out like so many separate interjections, endeavouring to look his friends in the face at each, and then turning his countenance back to his plate as though seeking for inspiration for the next attempt. He was not eloquent; but the gentlemen who heard him remembered that he was the great Augustus Melmotte, that he might probably make them all rich men, and they cheered him to the echo. Lord Alfred had reconciled himself to be called by his Christian name, since he had been put in the way of raising two or three hundred pounds on the security of shares which were to be allotted to him, but of which in the flesh he had as yet seen nothing. Wonderful are the ways of trade! If one can only get the tip of one's little finger

into the right pie, what noble morsels, what rich esculents, will stick to it as it is extracted!

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After the first cigar, Melmotte withdrew, and Lord

Alfred went with him. Lord Alfred would have liked to remain, being a man who enjoyed tobacco and soda and brandy,—but momentous days had come upon him, and he thought it well to cling to his Melmotte. Mr. Samuel Cohenlupe also went, not having taken a very distinguished part in the entertainment. Then the young men were left alone, and it was soon proposed that they should adjourn to the cardroom. It had been rather hoped that Fisker would go with the elders. Nidderdale, who did not understand much about the races of mankind, had his doubts whether the American gentleman might not be a "Heathen Chinee," such as he had read of in poetry. But Mr. Fisker liked to have his amusement as well as did the others, and went up resolutely into the cardroom. Here they were joined by Lord Grasslough, and were very quickly at work, having chosen loo as their game. Mr. Fisker made an allusion to poker as a desirable pastime, but Lord Nidderdale, remembering his poetry, shook his head. "Oh! bother," he said, "let's have some game that Christians play." Mr. Fisker declared himself ready for any game,—irrespective of religious prejudices.

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When I.O.U.'s have for some time passed freely in such a company as that now assembled the sudden introduction of a stranger is very disagreeable, particularly when that stranger intends to start for San Francisco on the following morning. If it could be arranged that the stranger should certainly lose, no doubt then he would be regarded as a godsend. Such strangers have ready money in their pockets, a portion of which would be felt to descend like a soft shower in a time of drought. When these dealings in unsecured paper have been going on for a considerable time real bank notes come to have a loveliness which they never possessed before. But should the stranger win, then there may arise complications incapable of any comfortable solution. In such a state of things some Herr Vossner must be called in, whose terms are apt to be ruinous. On this occasion things did not arrange themselves comfortably. From the very commencement Fisker won, and quite a budget of little papers fell into his possession, many of which were passed to him from the hands of Sir Felix,—bearing, however, a "G" intended to stand for Grasslough, or an "N" for Nidderdale, or a wonderful hieroglyphic which was known at the Beargarden to mean D. L——, or Dolly Longestaffe, the fabricator of which was not present on the occasion.

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"I dare say they did, but they are all good against these other fellows." Then Fisker, with most perfect good humour, extracted one from the mass which indicated Dolly Longestaffe's indebtedness to the amount of £50. "That's Longestaffe," said Felix, "and I'll change that of course." Then out of his pocket-book he extracted other minute documents bearing that M. G. which was so little esteemed among them,—and so made up the sum. "You seem to have £150 from Grasslough, £145 from Nidderdale, and £322 10*s.* from Grendall," said the baronet. Then Sir Felix got up as though he had paid his score. Fisker, with smiling good humour, arranged the little bits of paper before him and looked round upon the company.

"This won't do, you know," said Nidderdale. "Mr. Fisker must have his money before he leaves. You've got it, Carbury."

"Of course he has," said Grasslough.

"As it happens I have not," said Sir Felix;—"but what if I had?"

"Mr. Fisker starts for New York immediately," said Lord Nidderdale. "I suppose we can muster £600

among us. Ring the bell for Vossner. I think Carbury ought to pay the money as he lost it, and we didn't expect to have our I.O.U.'s brought up in this way."

"Lord Nidderdale," said Sir Felix, "I have already said that I have not got the money about me. Why should I have it more than you, especially as I knew I had I.O.U.'s more than sufficient to meet anything I could lose when I sat down?"

"Mr. Fisker must have his money at any rate," said Lord Nidderdale, ringing the bell again.

"It doesn't matter one straw, my lord," said the American. "Let it be sent to me to Frisco, in a bill, my lord." And so he got up to take his hat, greatly to the delight of Miles Grendall.

But the two young lords would not agree to this. "If you must go this very minute I'll meet you at the train with the money," said Nidderdale. Fisker begged that no such trouble should be taken. Of course he would wait ten minutes if they wished. But the affair was one of no consequence. Wasn't the post running every day? Then Herr Vossner came from his bed, suddenly arrayed in a dressing-gown, and there was a conference in a corner between him, the two lords, and Mr. Grendall. In a very few minutes Herr Vossner wrote a cheque for the amount due by the lords, but he was afraid that he had not money at his banker's sufficient for the greater claim. It was well understood that Herr Vossner would not advance money to Mr. Grendall unless others would pledge themselves for the amount.

"I suppose I'd better send you a bill over to America," said Miles Grendall, who had taken no part in the matter as long as he was in the same boat with the lords.

"Just so. My partner, Montague, will tell you the

and wines,—and paid for them. Lord Nidderdale took the chair, with Fisker on his right hand, and Melmotte on his left, and, for a fast-going young lord, was supposed to have done the thing well. There were only two toasts drunk, to the healths of Mr. Melmotte and Mr. Fisker, and two speeches were of course made by them. Mr. Melmotte may have been held to have clearly proved the genuineness of that English birth which he claimed by the awkwardness and incapacity which he showed on the occasion. He stood with his hands on the table and with his face turned to his plate blurted out his assurance that the floating of this railway company would be one of the greatest and most successful commercial operations ever conducted on either side of the Atlantic. It was a great thing,—a very great thing;—he had no hesitation in saying that it was one of the greatest things out. He didn't believe a greater thing had ever come out. He was happy to give his humble assistance to the furtherance of so great a thing,—and so on. These assertions, not varying much one from the other, he jerked out like so many separate interjections, endeavouring to look his friends in the face at each, and then turning his countenance back to his plate as though seeking for inspiration for the next attempt. He was not eloquent; but the gentlemen who heard him remembered that he was the great Augustus Melmotte, that he might probably make them all rich men, and they cheered him to the echo. Lord Alfred had reconciled himself to be called by his Christian name, since he had been put in the way of raising two or three hundred pounds on the security of shares which were to be allotted to him, but of which in the flesh he had as yet seen nothing. Wonderful are the ways of trade! If one can only get the tip of one's little finger

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"I dare say they did, but they are all good against these other fellows." Then Fisker, with most perfect good humour, extracted one from the mass which indicated Dolly Longestaffe's indebtedness to the amount of £50. "That's Longestaffe," said Felix, "and I'll change that of course." Then out of his pocket-book he extracted other minute documents bearing that M. G. which was so little esteemed among them,—and so made up the sum. "You seem to have £150 from Grasslough, £145 from Nidderdale, and £322 10*s.* from Grendall," said the baronet. Then Sir Felix got up as though he had paid his score. Fisker, with smiling good humour, arranged the little bits of paper before him and looked round upon the company.

"This won't do, you know," said Nidderdale. "Mr. Fisker must have his money before he leaves. You've got it, Carbury."

"Of course he has," said Grasslough.

"As it happens I have not," said Sir Felix;—"but what if I had?"

"Mr. Fisker starts for New York immediately," said Lord Nidderdale. "I suppose we can muster £600

among us. Ring the bell for Vossner. I think Carbury ought to pay the money as he lost it, and we didn't expect to have our I.O.U.'s brought up in this way."

"Lord Nidderdale," said Sir Felix, "I have already said that I have not got the money about me. Why should I have it more than you, especially as I knew I had I.O.U.'s more than sufficient to meet anything I could lose when I sat down?"

"Mr. Fisker must have his money at any rate," said Lord Nidderdale, ringing the bell again.

"It doesn't matter one straw, my lord," said the American. "Let it be sent to me to Frisco, in a bill, my lord." And so he got up to take his hat, greatly to the delight of Miles Grendall.

But the two young lords would not agree to this. "If you must go this very minute I'll meet you at the train with the money," said Nidderdale. Fisker begged that no such trouble should be taken. Of course he would wait ten minutes if they wished. But the affair was one of no consequence. Wasn't the post running every day? Then Herr Vossner came from his bed, suddenly arrayed in a dressing-gown, and there was a conference in a corner between him, the two lords, and Mr. Grendall. In a very few minutes Herr Vossner wrote a cheque for the amount due by the lords, but he was afraid that he had not money at his banker's sufficient for the greater claim. It was well understood that Herr Vossner would not advance money to Mr. Grendall unless others would pledge themselves for the amount.

"I suppose I'd better send you a bill over to America," said Miles Grendall, who had taken no part in the matter as long as he was in the same boat with the lords.

"Just so. My partner, Montague, will tell you the

address." Then bustling off, taking an affectionate adieu of Paul, shaking hands with them all round, and looking as though he cared nothing for the money, he took his leave. "One cheer for the South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway," he said as he went out of the room.

Not one there had liked Fisker. His manners were not as their manners; his waistcoat not as their waistcoats. He smoked his cigar after a fashion different from theirs, and spat upon the carpet. He said my lord too often, and grated their prejudices equally whether he treated them with familiarity or deference. But he had behaved well about the money, and they felt that they were behaving badly. Sir Felix was the immediate offender, as he should have understood that he was not entitled to pay a stranger with documents which, by tacit contract, were held to be good among themselves. But there was no use now in going back to that. Something must be done.

"Vossner must get the money," said Nidderdale. "Let's have him up again."

"I don't think it's my fault," said Miles. "Of course no one thought he was to be called upon in this sort of way."

"Why shouldn't you be called upon?" said Carbury. "You acknowledge that you owe the money."

"I think Carbury ought to have paid it," said Grasslough.

"Grassy, my boy," said the baronet, "your attempts at thinking are never worth much. Why was I to suppose that a stranger would be playing among us? Had you a lot of ready money with you to pay if you had lost it? I don't always walk about with six hundred pounds in my pocket;—nor do you!"

"It's no good jawing," said Nidderdale; "let's get the

money." Then Montague offered to undertake the debt himself, saying that there were money transactions between him and his partner. But this could not be allowed. He had only lately come among them, had as yet had no dealing in I.O.U.'s, and was the last man in the company who ought to be made responsible for the impecuniosity of Miles Grendall. He, the impecunious one,—the one whose impecuniosity extended to the absolute want of credit,—sat silent, stroking his heavy moustache.

There was a second conference between Herr Vossner and the two lords in another room, which ended in the preparation of a document by which Miles Grendall undertook to pay to Herr Vossner £450 at the end of three months, and this was endorsed by the two lords, by Sir Felix, and by Paul Montague; and in return for this the German produced £322 10*s.* in notes and gold. This had taken some considerable time. Then a cup of tea was prepared and swallowed; after which Nidderdale, with Montague, started off to meet Fisker at the railway station. "It'll only be a trifle over £100 each," said Nidderdale, in the cab.

"Won't Mr. Grendall pay it?"

"Oh, dear no. How the devil should he?"

"Then he shouldn't play."

"That 'd be hard on him, poor fellow. If you went to his uncle the duke, I suppose you could get it. Or Buntingford might put it right for you. Perhaps he might win, you know, some day, and then he'd make it square. He'd be fair enough if he had it. Poor Miles!"

They found Fisker wonderfully brilliant with bright rugs, and greatcoats with silk linings. "We've brought

you the tin," said Nidderdale, accosting him on the platform.

"Upon my word, my lord, I'm sorry you have taken so much trouble about such a trifle."

"A man should always have his money when he wins."

"We don't think anything about such little matters at Frisco, my lord."

"You're fine fellows at Frisco, I dare say. Here we pay up,—when we can. Sometimes we can't, and then it is not pleasant." Fresh adieus were made between the two partners, and between the American and the lord; —and then Fisker was taken off on his way towards Frisco. "He's not half a bad fellow, but he's not a bit like an Englishman," said Lord Nidderdale, as he walked out of the station.

CHAPTER XI.

Lady Carbury at Home.

DURING the last six weeks Lady Carbury had lived a life of very mixed depression and elevation. Her great work had come out,—the "Criminal Queens",—and had been very widely reviewed. In this matter it had been by no means all pleasure, in as much as many very hard words had been said of her. In spite of the dear friendship between herself and Mr. Alf, one of Mr. Alf's most sharp-nailed subordinates had been set upon her book, and had pulled it to pieces with almost rabid malignity. One would have thought that so light a thing could hardly have been worthy of such protracted attention. Error after error was laid bare with merciless prolixity. No doubt the writer of the article must have had all

history at his finger-ends, as in pointing out the various mistakes made he always spoke of the historical facts which had been misquoted, misdated, or misrepresented, as being familiar in all their bearings to every schoolboy of twelve years old. The writer of the criticism never suggested the idea that he himself, having been fully provided with books of reference, and having learned the art of finding in them what he wanted at a moment's notice, had, as he went on with his work, checked off the blunders without any more permanent knowledge of his own than a housekeeper has of coals when she counts so many sacks into the coal-cellar. He spoke of the parentage of one wicked ancient lady, and the dates of the frailties of another, with an assurance intended to show that an exact knowledge of all these details abided with him always. He must have been a man of vast and varied erudition, and his name was Jones. The world knew him not, but his erudition was always there at the command of Mr. Alf,—and his cruelty. The greatness of Mr. Alf consisted in this, that he always had a Mr. Jones or two ready to do his work for him. It was a great business, this of Mr. Alf's, for he had his Jones also for philology, for science, for poetry, for politics, as well as for history, and one special Jones, extraordinarily accurate and very well posted up in his references, entirely devoted to the Elizabethan drama.

There is the review intended to sell a book,—which comes out immediately after the appearance of the book, or sometimes before it; the review which gives reputation, but does not affect the sale, and which comes a little later; the review which snuffs a book out quietly; the review which is to raise or lower the author a single peg, or two pegs, as the case may be; the review which is suddenly to make an author, and the review which is

to crush him. An exuberant Jones has been known before now to declare aloud that he would crush a man, and a self-confident Jones has been known to declare that he has accomplished the deed. Of all reviews, the crushing review is the most popular, as being the most readable. When the rumour goes abroad that some notable man has been actually crushed,—been positively driven over by an entire Juggernaut's car of criticism till his literary body be a mere amorphous mass,—then a real success has been achieved, and the Alf of the day has done a great thing; but even the crushing of a poor Lady Carbury, if it be absolute, is effective. Such a review will not make all the world call for the "Evening Pulpit," but it will cause those who do take the paper to be satisfied with their bargain. Whenever the circulation of such a paper begins to slacken, the proprietors should, as a matter of course, admonish their Alf to add a little power to the crushing department.

Lady Carbury had been crushed by the "Evening Pulpit." We may fancy that it was easy work, and that Mr. Alf's historical Mr. Jones was not forced to fatigue himself by the handling of many books of reference. The errors did lie a little near the surface; and the whole scheme of the work, with its pandering to bad tastes by pretended revelations of frequently fabulous crime, was reprobated in Mr. Jones's very best manner. But the poor authoress, though utterly crushed, and reduced to little more than literary pulp for an hour or two, was not destroyed. On the following morning she went to her publishers and was closeted for half an hour with the senior partner, Mr. Leadham. "I've got it all in black and white," she said, full of the wrong which had been done her, "and can prove him to be wrong. It was in 1522 that the man first came to Paris, and he

couldn't have been her lover before that. I got it all out of the 'Biographie Universelle.' I'll write to Mr. Alf myself,—a letter to be published, you know."

"Pray don't do anything of the kind, Lady Carbury."

"I can prove that I'm right."

"And they can prove that you're wrong."

"I've got all the facts,—and the figures."

Mr. Leadham did not care a straw for facts or figures,—had no opinion of his own whether the lady or the reviewer were right; but he knew very well that the "Evening Pulpit" would surely get the better of any mere author in such a contention. "Never fight the newspapers, Lady Carbury. Who ever yet got any satisfaction by that kind of thing? It's their business, and you are not used to it."

"And Mr. Alf is my particular friend! It does seem so hard," said Lady Carbury, wiping hot tears from her cheeks.

"It won't do us the least harm, Lady Carbury."

"It'll stop the sale?"

"Not much. A book of that sort couldn't hope to go on very long, you know. The 'Breakfast Table' gave it an excellent lift, and came just at the right time. I rather like the notice in the 'Pulpit,' myself."

"Like it!" said Lady Carbury, still suffering in every fibre of her self-love from the soreness produced by those Juggernaut's car-wheels.

"Anything is better than indifference, Lady Carbury. A great many people remember simply that the book has been noticed, but carry away nothing as to the purport of the review. It's a very good advertisement."

"But to be told that I have got to learn the A B C of history,—after working as I have worked!"

"That's a mere form of speech, Lady Carbury."

"You think the book has done pretty well?"

"Pretty well;—just about what we hoped, you know."

"There'll be something coming to me, Mr. Leadham?"

Mr. Leadham sent for a ledger, and turned over a few pages and ran up a few figures, and then scratched his head. There would be something, but Lady Carbury was not to imagine that it could be very much. It did not often happen that a great deal could be made by a first book. Nevertheless, Lady Carbury, when she left the publisher's shop, did carry a cheque with her. She was smartly dressed and looked very well, and had smiled on Mr. Leadham. Mr. Leadham, too, was no more than man, and had written—a small cheque.

Mr. Alf certainly had behaved badly to her; but both Mr. Broune of the "Breakfast Table," and Mr. Booker of the "Literary Chronicle," had been true to her interests. Lady Carbury had, as she promised, "done" Mr. Booker's "New Tale of a Tub" in the "Breakfast Table." That is, she had been allowed, as a reward for looking into Mr. Broune's eyes, and laying her soft hand on Mr. Broune's sleeve, and suggesting to Mr. Broune that no one understood her so well as he did, to bedaub Mr. Booker's very thoughtful book in a very thoughtless fashion,—and to be paid for her work. What had been said about his work in the "Breakfast Table" had been very distasteful to poor Mr. Booker. It grieved his inner contemplative intelligence that such rubbish should be thrown upon him; but in his outside experience of life he knew that even the rubbish was valuable, and that he must pay for it in the manner to which he had unfortunately become accustomed. So Mr. Booker himself wrote the article on the "Criminal Queens" in the "Literary Chronicle," knowing that what

he wrote would also be rubbish. "Remarkable vivacity." "Power of delineating character." "Excellent choice of subject." "Considerable intimacy with the historical details of various periods." "The literary world would be sure to hear of Lady Carbury again." The composition of the review, together with the reading of the book, consumed altogether perhaps an hour of Mr. Booker's time. He made no attempt to cut the pages, but here and there read those that were open. He had done this kind of thing so often, that he knew well what he was about. He could have reviewed such a book when he was three parts asleep. When the work was done he threw down his pen and uttered a deep sigh. He felt it to be hard upon him that he should be compelled, by the exigencies of his position, to descend so low in literature; but it did not occur to him to reflect that in fact he was not compelled, and that he was quite at liberty to break stones, or to starve honestly, if no other honest mode of carrying on his career was open to him. "If I didn't, somebody else would," he said to himself.

But the review in the "Morning Breakfast Table" was the making of Lady Carbury's book, as far as it ever was made. Mr. Broune saw the lady after the receipt of the letter given in the first chapter of this Tale, and was induced to make valuable promises which had been fully performed. Two whole columns had been devoted to the work, and the world had been assured that no more delightful mixture of amusement and instruction had ever been concocted than Lady Carbury's "Criminal Queens." It was the very book that had been wanted for years. It was a work of infinite research and brilliant imagination combined. There had been no hesitation in the laying on of the paint.

At that last meeting Lady Carbury had been very soft, very handsome, and very winning; Mr. Broune had given the order with good will, and it had been obeyed in the same feeling.

Therefore, though the crushing had been very real, there had also been some elation; and as a net result, Lady Carbury was disposed to think that her literary career might yet be a success. Mr. Leadham's cheque had been for a small amount, but it might probably lead the way to something better. People at any rate were talking about her, and her Tuesday evenings at home were generally full. But her literary life, and her literary successes, her flirtations with Mr. Broune, her business with Mr. Booker, and her crushing by Mr. Alf's Mr. Jones, were after all but adjuncts to that real inner life of hers of which the absorbing interest was her son. And with regard to him too she was partly depressed, and partly elated, allowing her hopes however to dominate her fears. There was very much to frighten her. Even the moderate reform in the young man's expenses which had been effected under dire necessity had been of late abandoned. Though he never told her anything, she became aware that during the last month of the hunting season he had hunted nearly every day. She knew, too, that he had a horse up in town. She never saw him but once in the day, when she visited him in his bed about noon, and was aware that he was always at his club throughout the night. She knew that he was gambling, and she hated gambling as being of all pastimes the most dangerous. But she knew that he had ready money for his immediate purposes, and that two or three tradesmen who were gifted with a peculiar power of annoying their debtors, had ceased to trouble her in Welbeck Street. For the present, therefore, she

consoled herself by reflecting that his gambling was successful. But her elation sprung from a higher source than this. From all that she could hear, she thought it likely that Felix would carry off the great prize; and then,—should he do that,—what a blessed son would he have been to her! How constantly in her triumph would she be able to forget all his vices, his debts, his gambling, his late hours, and his cruel treatment of herself! As she thought of it the bliss seemed to be too great for the possibility of realisation. She was taught to understand that £10,000 a year, to begin with, would be the least of it; and that the ultimate wealth might probably be such as to make Sir Felix Carbury the richest commoner in England. In her very heart of hearts she worshipped wealth, but desired it for him rather than for herself. Then her mind ran away to baronies and earldoms, and she was lost in the coming glories of the boy whose faults had already nearly engulfed her in his own ruin.

And she had another ground for elation, which comforted her much, though elation from such a cause was altogether absurd. She had discovered that her son had become a Director of the South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway Company. She must have known,—she certainly did know,—that Felix, such as he was, could not lend assistance by his work to any company or commercial enterprise in the world. She was aware that there was some reason for such a choice hidden from the world, and which comprised and conveyed a falsehood. A ruined baronet of five-and-twenty, every hour of whose life since he had been left to go alone had been loaded with vice and folly,—whose egregious misconduct warranted his friends in regarding him as one incapable of knowing what principle is,—of what

service could he be, that he should be made a Director? But Lady Carbury, though she knew that he could be of no service, was not at all shocked. She was now able to speak up a little for her boy, and did not forget to send the news by post to Roger Carbury. And her son sat at the same Board with Mr. Melmotte! What an indication was this of coming triumphs!

Fisker had started, as the reader will perhaps remember, on the morning of Saturday 19th April, leaving Sir Felix at the Club at about seven in the morning. All that day his mother was unable to see him. She found him asleep in his room at noon and again at two; and when she sought him again he had flown. But on the Sunday she caught him. "I hope," she said, "you'll stay at home on Tuesday evening." Hitherto she had never succeeded in inducing him to grace her evening parties by his presence.

"All your people are coming! You know, mother, it is such an awful bore."

"Madame Melmotte and her daughter will be here."

"One looks such a fool carrying on that kind of thing in one's own house. Everybody sees that it has been contrived. And it is such a pokey, stuffy little place!"

Then Lady Carbury spoke out her mind. "Felix, I think you must be a fool. I have given over ever expecting that you would do anything to please me. I sacrifice everything for you and I do not even hope for a return. But when I am doing everything to advance your own interests, when I am working night and day to rescue you from ruin, I think you might at any rate help a little,—not for me of course, but for yourself."

"I don't know what you mean by working day and night. I don't want you to work day and night."

"There is hardly a young man in London that is not thinking of this girl, and you have chances that none of them have. I am told they are going out of town at Whitsuntide, and that she's to meet Lord Nidderdale down in the country."

"She can't endure Nidderdale. She says so herself."

"She will do as she is told,—unless she can be made to be downright in love with some one like yourself. Why not ask her at once on Tuesday?"

"If I'm to do it at all I must do it after my own fashion. I'm not going to be driven."

"Of course if you will not take the trouble to be here to see her when she comes to your own house, you cannot expect her to think that you really love her."

"Love her! what a bother there is about loving! Well;—I'll look in. What time do the animals come to feed?"

"There will be no feeding. Felix you are so heartless and so cruel that I sometimes think I will make up my mind to let you go your own way and never to speak to you again. My friends will be here about ten;—I should say from ten till twelve. I think you should be here to receive her, not later than ten."

"If I can get my dinner out of my throat by that time, I will come."

When the Tuesday came, the over-driven young man did contrive to get his dinner eaten, and his glass of brandy sipped, and his cigar smoked, and perhaps his game of billiards played, so as to present himself in his mother's drawing-room not long after half-past ten. Madame Melmotte and her daughter were already there,—and many others, of whom the majority were devoted to literature. Among them Mr. Alf was in the room,

and was at this very moment discussing Lady Carbury's book with Mr. Booker. He had been quite graciously received, as though he had not authorised the crushing. Lady Carbury had given him her hand with that energy of affection, with which she was wont to welcome her literary friends, and had simply thrown one glance of appeal into his eyes as she looked into his face,—as though asking him how he had found it in his heart to be so cruel to one so tender, so unprotected, so innocent as herself. "I cannot stand this kind of thing," said Mr. Alf, to Mr. Booker. "There's a regular system of touting got abroad, and I mean to trample it down."

"If you're strong enough," said Mr. Booker.

"Well, I think I am. I'm strong enough, at any rate, to show that I'm not afraid to lead the way. I've the greatest possible regard for our friend here;—but her book is a bad book, a thoroughly rotten book, an unblushing compilation from half-a-dozen works of established reputation, in pilfering from which she has almost always managed to misapprehend her facts, and to muddle her dates. Then she writes to me and asks me to do the best I can for her. I have done the best I could."

Mr. Alf knew very well what Mr. Booker had done, and Mr. Booker was aware of the extent of Mr. Alf's knowledge. "What you say is all very right," said Mr. Booker; "only you want a different kind of world to live in."

"Just so;—and therefore we must make it different. I wonder how our friend Broune felt when he saw that his critic had declared that the 'Criminal Queens' was the greatest historical work of modern days."

"I didn't see the notice. There isn't much in the book, certainly, as far as I have looked at it. I should.

have said that violent censure or violent praise would be equally thrown away upon it. One doesn't want to break a butterfly on the wheel;—especially a friendly butterfly."

"As to the friendship, it should be kept separate. That's my idea," said Mr. Alf, moving away.

"I'll never forget what you've done for me,—never!" said Lady Carbury, holding Mr. Broune's hand for a moment, as she whispered to him.

"Nothing more than my duty," said he, smiling.

"I hope you'll learn to know that a woman can really be grateful," she replied. Then she let go his hand and moved away to some other guest. There was a dash of true sincerity in what she had said. Of enduring gratitude it may be doubtful whether she was capable: but at this moment she did feel that Mr. Broune had done much for her, and that she would willingly make him some return of friendship. Of any feeling of another sort, of any turn at the moment towards flirtation, of any idea of encouragement to a gentleman who had once acted as though he were her lover, she was absolutely innocent. She had forgotten that little absurd episode in their joint lives. She was at any rate too much in earnest at the present moment to think about it. But it was otherwise with Mr. Broune. He could not quite make up his mind whether the lady was or was not in love with him,—or whether, if she were, it was incumbent on him to indulge her;—and if so, in what manner. Then as he looked after her, he told himself that she was certainly very beautiful, that her figure was distinguished, that her income was certain, and her rank considerable. Nevertheless, Mr. Broune knew of himself that he was not a marrying man. He had made up his mind that marriage would not suit his business,

and he smiled to himself as he reflected how impossible it was that such a one as Lady Carbury should turn him from his resolution.

"I am so glad that you have come to-night, Mr. Alf," Lady Carbury said to the high-minded editor of the "Evening Pulpit."

"Am I not always glad to come, Lady Carbury?"

"You are very good. But I feared,—"

"Feared what, Lady Carbury?"

"That you might perhaps have felt that I should be unwilling to welcome you after,—well after the compliments of last Thursday."

"I never allow the two things to join themselves together. You see, Lady Carbury, I don't write all these things myself."

"No indeed. What a bitter creature you would be if you did."

"To tell the truth, I never write any of them. Of course we endeavour to get people whose judgments we can trust, and if, as in this case, it should unfortunately happen that the judgment of our critic should be hostile to the literary pretensions of a personal friend of my own, I can only lament the accident, and trust that my friend may have spirit enough to divide me as an individual from that Mr. Alf who has the misfortune to edit a newspaper."

"It is because you have so trusted me that I am obliged to you," said Lady Carbury with her sweetest smile. She did not believe a word that Mr. Alf had said to her. She thought, and thought rightly, that Mr. Alf's Mr. Jones had taken direct orders from his editor, as to his treatment of the "Criminal Queens." But she remembered that she intended to write another book, and

that she might perhaps conquer even Mr. Alf by spirit and courage under her present infliction.

It was Lady Carbury's duty on the occasion to say pretty things to everybody. And she did her duty. But in the midst of it all she was ever thinking of her son and Marie Melmotte, and she did at last venture to separate the girl from her mother. Marie herself was not unwilling to be talked to by Sir Felix. He had never bullied her, had never seemed to scorn her; and then he was so beautiful! She, poor girl, bewildered among various suitors, utterly confused by the life to which she was introduced, troubled by fitful attacks of admonition from her father, who would again, fitfully, leave her unnoticed for a week at a time; with no trust in her pseudo-mother —for poor Marie had in truth been born before her father had been a married man, and had never known what was her own mother's fate,—with no enjoyment in her present life, had come solely to this conclusion, that it would be well for her to be taken away somewhere by somebody. Many a varied phase of life had already come in her way. She could just remember the dirty street in the German portion of New York in which she had been born and had lived for the first four years of her life, and could remember too the poor, hardly-treated woman who had been her mother. She could remember being at sea, and her sickness,—but could not quite remember whether that woman had been with her. Then she had run about the streets of Hamburgh, and had sometimes been very hungry, sometimes in rags,—and she had a dim memory of some trouble into which her father had fallen, and that he was away from her for a time. She had up to the present splendid moment her own convictions about that absence, but she had never mentioned them to a human being. Then her father had

married her present mother in Frankfort. That she could remember distinctly, as also the rooms in which she was then taken to live, and the fact that she was told that from henceforth she was to be a Jewess. But there had soon come another change. They went from Frankfort to Paris, and there they were all Christians. From that time they had lived in various apartments in the French capital, but had always lived well. Sometimes there had been a carriage, sometimes there had been none. And then there came a time in which she was grown woman enough to understand that her father was being much talked about. Her father to her had always been alternately capricious and indifferent rather than cross or cruel, but just at this period he was cruel both to her and to his wife. And Madame Melmotte would weep at times and declare that they were all ruined. Then, at a moment, they burst out into sudden splendour at Paris. There was an hotel, with carriages and horses almost unnumbered;—and then there came to their rooms a crowd of dark, swarthy, greasy men, who were entertained sumptuously; but there were few women. At this time Marie was hardly nineteen, and young enough in manner and appearance to be taken for seventeen. Suddenly again she was told that she was to be taken to London, and the migration had been effected with magnificence. She was first taken to Brighton, where the half of an hotel had been hired, and had then been brought to Grosvenor-square, and at once thrown into the matrimonial market. No part of her life had been more disagreeable to her, more frightful, than the first months in which she had been trafficked for by the Nidderdales and Grassloughs. She had been too frightened, too much of a coward to object to anything proposed to her, but still had been conscious of a desire to

have some hand in her own future destiny. Luckily for her, the first attempts at trafficking with the Nidderdales and Grassloughs had come to nothing; and at length she was picking up a little courage, and was beginning to feel that it might be possible to prevent a disposition of herself which did not suit her own tastes. She was also beginning to think that there might be a disposition of herself which would suit her own tastes.

Felix Carbury was standing leaning against a wall, and she was seated on a chair close to him. "I love you better than anyone in the world," he said, speaking plainly enough for her to hear, perhaps indifferent as to the hearing of others.

"Oh, Sir Felix, pray do not talk like that."

"You knew that before. Now I want you to say whether you will be my wife."

"How can I answer that myself? Papa settles everything."

"May I go to papa?"

"You may if you like," she replied in a very low whisper. It was thus that the greatest heiress of the day, the greatest heiress of any day if people spoke truly, gave herself away to a man without a penny.

CHAPTER XII.

Sir Felix in his Mother's House.

WHEN all her friends were gone Lady Carbury looked about for her son,—not expecting to find him, for she knew how punctual was his nightly attendance at the Beargarden, but still with some faint hope that he might have remained on this special occasion to tell her of his fortune. She had watched the whispering, had noticed the cool effrontery with which Felix had spoken,—for without hearing the words she had almost known the very moment in which he was asking,—and had seen the girl's timid face, and eyes turned to the ground, and the nervous twitching of her hands as she replied. As a woman, understanding such things, who had herself been wooed, who had at least dreamed of love, she had greatly disapproved her son's manner. But yet, if it might be successful, if the girl would put up with love making so slight as that, and if the great Melmotte would accept in return for his money a title so modest as that of her son, how glorious should her son be to her in spite of his indifference!

"I heard him leave the house before the Melmottes went," said Henrietta, when the mother spoke of going up to her son's bedroom.

"He might have stayed to-night. Do you think he asked her?"

"How can I say, mamma?"

"I should have thought you would have been anxious about your brother. I feel sure he did,—and that she accepted him."

"If so I hope he will be good to her. I hope he loves her."

"Why shouldn't he love her as well as any one else? A girl need not be odious because she has money. There is nothing disagreeable about her."

"No,—nothing disagreeable. I do not know that she is especially attractive."

"Who is? I don't see anybody specially attractive. It seems to me you are quite indifferent about Felix."

"Do not say that, mamma."

"Yes you are. You don't understand all that he might be with this girl's fortune, and what he must be unless he gets money by marriage. He is eating us both up."

"I would not let him do that, mamma."

"It's all very well to say that, but I have some heart. I love him. I could not see him starve. Think what he might be with £20,000 a-year!"

"If he is to marry for that only, I cannot think that they will be happy."

"You had better go to bed, Henrietta. You never say a word to comfort me in all my troubles."

Then Henrietta went to bed, and Lady Carbury absolutely sat up the whole night waiting for her son, in order that she might hear his tidings. She went up to her room, disembarrassed herself of her finery, and wrapped herself in a white dressing-gown. As she sat opposite to her glass, relieving her head from its garniture of false hair, she acknowledged to herself that age was coming on her. She could hide the unwelcome approach by art,—hide it more completely than can most women of her age; but, there it was, stealing on her with short grey hairs over her ears and around her temples, with little wrinkles round her eyes easily concealed by un-

objectionable cosmetics, and a look of weariness round the mouth which could only be removed by that self assertion of herself which practice had made always possible to her in company, though it now so frequently deserted her when she was alone.

But she was not a woman to be unhappy because she was growing old. Her happiness, like that of most of us, was ever in the future,—never reached but always coming. She, however, had not looked for happiness to love and loveliness, and need not therefore be disappointed on that score. She had never really determined what it was that might make her happy,—having some hazy aspiration after social distinction and literary fame, in which was ever commingled solicitude respecting money. But at the present moment her great fears and her great hopes were centred on her son. She would not care how grey might be her hair, or how savage might be Mr. Alf, if her Felix were to marry this heiress. On the other hand, nothing that pearl-powder or the "Morning Breakfast Table" could do would avail anything, unless he could be extricated from the ruin that now surrounded him. So she went down into the dining-room, that she might be sure to hear the key in the door, even should she sleep, and waited for him with a volume of French memoirs in her hand.

Unfortunate woman! she might have gone to bed and have been duly called about her usual time, for it was past eight and the full staring daylight shone into her room when Felix's cab brought him to the door. The night had been very wretched to her. She had slept, and the fire had sunk nearly to nothing and had refused to become again comfortable. She could not keep her mind to her book, and while she was awake the time seemed to be everlasting. And then it was so terrible

to her that he should be gambling at such hours as these! Why should he desire to gamble if this girl's fortune was ready to fall into his hands? Fool, to risk his health, his character, his beauty, the little money which at this moment of time might be so indispensable to his great project, for the chance of winning something which in comparison with Marie Melmotte's money must be despicable! But at last he came! She waited patiently till he had thrown aside his hat and coat, and then she appeared at the dining-room door. She had studied her part for the occasion. She would not say a harsh word, and now she endeavoured to meet him with a smile. "Mother," he said, "you up at this hour!" His face was flushed, and she thought that there was some unsteadiness in his gait. She had never seen him tipsy, and it would be doubly terrible to her if such should be his condition.

"I could not go to bed till I had seen you."

"Why not? why should you want to see me? I'll go to bed now. There'll be plenty of time by-and-bye."

"Is anything the matter, Felix?"

"Matter;—what should be the matter. There's been a gentle row among the fellows at the club;—that's all. I had to tell Grasslough a bit of my mind, and he didn't like it. I didn't mean that he should."

"There is not going to be any fighting, Felix?"

"What, duelling; oh no,—nothing so exciting as that. Whether somebody may not have to kick somebody is more than I can say at present. You must let me go to bed now, for I am about used up."

"What did Marie Melmotte say to you?"

"Nothing particular." And he stood with his hand on the door as he answered her.

"And what did you say to her?"

"Nothing particular. Good heavens, mother, do you

think that a man is in a condition to talk about such stuff as that at eight o'clock in the morning, when he has been up all night."

"If you knew all that I suffer on your behalf you would speak a word to me," she said, imploring him, holding him by the arm, and looking into his purple face and bloodshot eyes. She was sure that he had been drinking. She could smell it in his breath.

"I must go to the old fellow, of course."

"She told you to go to her father?"

"As far as I remember, that was about it. Of course, he means to settle it as he likes. I should say that it's ten to one against me." Pulling himself away with some little roughness from his mother's hold, he made his way up to his own bedroom, occasionally stumbling against the stairs.

Then the heiress herself had accepted her son! If so, surely the thing might be done. Lady Carbury recalled to mind her old conviction that a daughter may always succeed in beating a hard-hearted parent in a contention about marriage, if she be well in earnest. But then the girl must be really in earnest, and her earnestness will depend on that of her lover. In this case, however, there was as yet no reason for supposing that the great man would object. As far as outward signs went, the great men had shown some partiality for her son. No doubt it was Mr. Melmotte who had made Sir Felix a director of the great American Company. Felix had also been kindly received in Grosvenor Square. And then Sir Felix was Sir Felix,—a real baronet. Mr. Melmotte had no doubt endeavoured to catch this and that lord; but, failing a lord, why should he not content himself with a baronet? Lady Carbury thought that her son wanted nothing but money to make him an acceptable suitor to

such a father-in-law as Mr. Melmotte;—not money in the funds, not a real fortune, not so many thousands a-year that could be settled;—the man's own enormous wealth rendered this unnecessary;—but such a one as Mr. Melmotte would not like outward palpable signs of immediate poverty. There should be means enough for present sleekness and present luxury. He must have a horse to ride, and rings and coats to wear, and bright little canes to carry, and above all the means of making presents. He must not be seen to be poor. Fortunately, most fortunately, Chance had befriended him lately and had given him some ready money. But if he went on gambling Chance would certainly take it all away again. For aught that the poor mother knew, Chance might have done so already. And then again, it was indispensable that he should abandon the habit of play—at any rate for the present, while his prospects depended on the good opinions of Mr. Melmotte. Of course such a one as Mr. Melmotte could not like gambling at a club, however much he might approve of it in the City. Why, with such a preceptor to help him, should not Felix learn to do his gambling on the Exchange, or among the brokers, or in the purlieus of the Bank. Lady Carbury would at any rate instigate him to be diligent in his position as director of the Great Mexican Railway,—which position ought to be the beginning to him of a fortune to be made on his own account. But what hope could there be for him if he should take to drink? Would not all hopes be over with Mr. Melmotte should he ever learn that his daughter's lover reached home and tumbled upstairs to bed between eight and nine o'clock in the morning?

She watched for his appearance on the following day, and began at once on the subject.

"Do you know, Felix, I think I shall go down to your cousin Roger for Whitsuntide."

"To Carbury Manor!" said he, as he eat some devilled kidneys which the cook had been specially ordered to get for his breakfast. "I thought you found it so dull that you didn't mean to go there any more."

"I never said so, Felix. And now I have a great object."

"What will Hetta do?"

"Go too—why shouldn't she?"

"Oh; I didn't know. I thought that perhaps she mightn't like it."

"I don't see why she shouldn't like it. Besides, everything can't give way to her."

"Has Roger asked you?"

"No; but I'm sure he'd be pleased to have us if I proposed that we should all go."

"Not me, mother!"

"Yes; you especially."

"Not if I know it, mother. What on earth should I do at Carbury Manor?"

"Madame Melmotte told me last night that they were all going down to Caversham to stay three or four days with the Longestaffes. She spoke of Lady Pomona as quite her particular friend."

"Oh—h! that explains it all."

"Explains what, Felix?" said Lady Carbury, who had heard of Dolly Longestaffe, and was not without some fear that this projected visit to Caversham might have some matrimonial purpose in reference to that delightful young heir.

"They say at the club that Melmotte has taken up old Longestaffe's affairs, and means to put them straight. There's an old property in Sussex as well as Caversham,

and they say that Melmotte is to have that himself. There's some bother because Dolly, who would do anything for anybody else, won't join his father in selling. So the Melmottes are going to Caversham!"

"Madame Melmotte told me so."

"And the Longestaffes are the proudest people in England."

"Of course we ought to be at Carbury Manor while they are there. What can be more natural? Everybody goes out of town at Whitsuntide; and why shouldn't we run down to the family place?"

"All very natural if you can manage it, mother."

"And you'll come?"

"If Marie Melmotte goes, I'll be there at any rate for one day and night," said Felix.

His mother thought that, for him, the promise had been graciously made.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Longestaffes.

Mr. Adolphus Longestaffe, the squire of Caversham in Suffolk, and of Pickering Park in Sussex, was closeted on a certain morning for the best part of an hour with Mr. Melmotte in Abchurch Lane, had there discussed all his private affairs, and was about to leave the room with a very dissatisfied air. There are men,—and old men too, who ought to know the world,—who think that if they can only find the proper Medea to boil the cauldron for them, they can have their ruined fortunes so cooked that they shall come out of the pot fresh and new and unembarrassed. These great conjurors are generally sought for in the City; and in truth the cauldrons are

kept boiling though the result of the process is seldom absolute rejuvenescence. No greater Medea than Mr. Melmotte had ever been potent in money matters, and Mr. Longestaffe had been taught to believe that if he could get the necromancer even to look at his affairs everything would be made right for him. But the necromancer had explained to the squire that property could not be created by the waving of any wand or the boiling of any cauldron. He, Mr. Melmotte, could put Mr. Longestaffe in the way of realising property without delay, of changing it from one shape into another, or could find out the real market value of the property in question; but he could create nothing. "You have only a life interest, Mr. Longestaffe."

"No; only a life interest. That is customary with family estates in this country, Mr. Melmotte."

"Just so. And therefore you can dispose of nothing else. Your son, of course, could join you, and then you could sell either one estate or the other."

"There is no question of selling Caversham, sir. Lady Pomona and I reside there."

"Your son will not join you in selling the other place?"

"I have not directly asked him; but he never does do anything that I wish. I suppose you would not take Pickering Park on a lease for my life."

"I think not, Mr. Longestaffe. My wife would not like the uncertainty."

Then Mr. Longestaffe took his leave with a feeling of outraged aristocratic pride. His own lawyer would almost have done as much for him, and he need not have invited his own lawyer as a guest to Caversham,—and certainly not his own lawyer's wife and daughter. He had indeed succeeded in borrowing a few thousand

pounds from the great man at a rate of interest which the great man's head clerk was to arrange, and this had been effected simply on the security of the lease of a house in town. There had been an ease in this, an absence of that delay which generally took place between the expression of his desire for money and the acquisition of it,—and this had gratified him. But he was already beginning to think that he might pay too dearly for that gratification. At the present moment, too, Mr. Melmotte was odious to him for another reason. He had condescended to ask Mr. Melmotte to make him a director of the South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway, and he,—Adolphus Longestaffe of Caversham,—had had his request refused! Mr. Longestaffe had condescended very low. "You have made Lord Alfred Grindall one!" he had said in a complaining tone. Then Mr. Melmotte explained that Lord Alfred possessed peculiar aptitudes for the position. "I'm sure I could do anything that he does," said Mr. Longestaffe. Upon this Mr. Melmotte, knitting his brows and speaking with some roughness, replied that the number of directors required was completed. Since he had had two duchesses at his house Mr. Melmotte was beginning to feel that he was entitled to bully any mere commoner, especially a commoner who could ask him for a seat at his board.

Mr. Longestaffe was a tall, heavy man, about fifty, with hair and whiskers carefully dyed, whose clothes were made with great care, though they always seemed to fit him too tightly, and who thought very much of his personal appearance. It was not that he considered himself handsome, but that he was specially proud of his aristocratic bearing. He entertained an idea that all who understood the matter would perceive at a single glance that he was a gentleman of the first water, and a man of

fashion. He was intensely proud of his position in life, thinking himself to be immensely superior to all those who earned their bread. There were no doubt gentlemen of different degrees, but the English gentleman of gentlemen was he who had land, and family title-deeds, and an old family place, and family portraits, and family embarrassments, and a family absence of any useful employment. He was beginning even to look down upon peers, since so many men of much less consequence than himself had been made lords; and, having stood and been beaten three or four times for his county, he was of opinion that a seat in the House was rather a mark of bad breeding. He was a silly man, who had no fixed idea that it behoved him to be of use to any one; but, yet, he had compassed a certain nobility of feeling. There was very little that his position called upon him to do, but there was much that it forbad him to do. It was not allowed to him to be close in money matters. He could leave his tradesmen's bills unpaid till the men were clamorous, but he could not question the items in their accounts. He could be tyrannical to his servants, but he could not make inquiry as to the consumption of his wines in the servants' hall. He had no pity for his tenants in regard to game, but he hesitated much as to raising their rent. He had his theory of life and endeavoured to live up to it; but the attempt had hardly brought satisfaction to himself or to his family.

At the present moment, it was the great desire of his heart to sell the smaller of his two properties and disembarrass the other. The debt had not been altogether of his own making, and the arrangement would, he believed, serve his whole family as well as himself. It would also serve his son, who was blessed with a third property of his own which he had already managed to

burden with debt. The father could not bear to be refused; and he feared that his son would decline. "But Adolphus wants money as much as any one," Lady Pomona had said. He had shaken his head, and pished and pshawed. Women never could understand anything about money. Now he walked down sadly from Mr. Melmotte's office and was taken in his brougham to his lawyer's chambers in Lincoln's Inn. Even for the accommodation of those few thousand pounds he was forced to condescend to tell his lawyers that the title-deeds of his house in town must be given up. Mr. Longestaffe felt that the world in general was very hard on him.

"What on earth are we to do with them?" said Sophia, the eldest Miss Longestaffe, to her mother.

"I do think it's a shame of papa," said Georgiana, the second daughter. "I certainly shan't trouble myself to entertain them."

"Of course you will leave them all on my hands," said Lady Pomona wearily.

"But what's the use of having them," urged Sophia. "I can understand going to a crush at their house in town when everybody else goes. One doesn't speak to them, and need not know them afterwards. As to the girl, I'm sure I shouldn't remember her if I were to see her."

"It would be a fine thing if Adolphus would marry her," said Lady Pomona.

"Dolly will never marry anybody," said Georgiana. "The idea of his taking the trouble of asking a girl to have him! Besides, he won't come down to Caversham; cart-ropes wouldn't bring him. If that is to be the game, mamma, it is quite hopeless."

"Why should Dolly marry such a creature as that?" asked Sophia.

"Because everybody wants money," said Lady Pomona. "I'm sure I don't know what your papa is to do, or how it is that there never is any money for anything. I don't spend it."

"I don't think that we do anything out of the way," said Sophia. "I haven't the slightest idea what papa's income is; but if we're to live at all, I don't know how we are to make a change."

"It's always been like this ever since I can remember," said Georgiana, "and I don't mean to worry about it any more. I suppose it's just the same with other people, only one doesn't know it."

"But, my dears—when we are obliged to have such people as these Melmottes!"

"As for that, if we didn't have them somebody else would. I shan't trouble myself about them. I suppose it will only be for two days."

"My dear, they're coming for a week!"

"Then papa must take them about the country, that's all. I never did hear of anything so absurd. What good can they do papa by being down there?"

"He is wonderfully rich," said Lady Pomona.

"But I don't suppose he'll give papa his money," continued Georgiana. "Of course I don't pretend to understand, but I think there is more fuss about these things than they deserve. If papa hasn't got money to live at home, why doesn't he go abroad for a year. The Sydney Beauchamps did that, and the girls had quite a nice time of it in Florence. It was there that Clara Beauchamp met young Lord Liffey. I shouldn't at all mind that kind of thing, but I think it quite horrible to have these sort of people brought down upon us at Caversham.

No one knows who they are, or where they came from, or what they'll turn to." So spoke Georgiana, who among the Longestaffes was supposed to have the strongest head, and certainly the sharpest tongue.

This conversation took place in the drawing-room of the Longestaffes' family town-house in Bruton Street. It was not by any means a charming house, having but few of those luxuries and elegancies which have been added of late years to newly-built London residences. It was gloomy and inconvenient, with large drawing-rooms, bad bedrooms, and very little accommodation for servants. But it was the old family town-house, having been inhabited by three or four generations of Longestaffes, and did not savour of that radical newness which prevails, and which was peculiarly distasteful to Mr. Longestaffe. Queen's Gate and the quarters around were, according to Mr. Longestaffe, devoted to opulent tradesmen. Even Belgrave Square, though its aristocratic properties must be admitted, still smelt of the mortar. Many of those living there and thereabouts had never possessed in their families real family town-houses. The old streets lying between Piccadilly and Oxford Street, with one or two well-known localities to the south and north of those boundaries, were the proper sites for these habitations. When Lady Pomona, instigated by some friend of high rank but questionable taste, had once suggested a change to Eaton Square, Mr. Longestaffe had at once snubbed his wife. If Burton Street wasn't good enough for her and the girls then they might remain at Caversham. The threat of remaining at Caversham had been often made, for Mr. Longestaffe, proud as he was of his town-house, was, from year to year, very anxious to save the expense of the annual migration. The girls' dresses and the girls' horses, his wife's carriage and his own brougham, his

dull London dinner-parties, and the one ball which it was always necessary that Lady Pomona should give, made him look forward to the end of July, with more dread than to any other period. It was then that he began to know what that year's season would cost him. But he had never yet been able to keep his family in the country during the entire year. The girls, who as yet knew nothing of the Continent beyond Paris, had signified their willingness to be taken about Germany and Italy for twelve months, but had shown by every means in their power that they would mutiny against any intention on their father's part to keep them at Caversham during the London season.

Georgiana had just finished her strong-minded protest again the Melmottes, when her brother strolled into the room. Dolly did not often show himself in Burton Street. He had rooms of his own, and could seldom even be induced to dine with his family. His mother wrote to him notes without end,—notes every day, pressing invitations of all sorts upon him; would he come and dine; would he take them to the theatre; would he go to this ball; would he go to that evening-party? These Dolly barely read, and never answered. He would open them, thrust them into some pocket, and then forget them. Consequently his mother worshipped him; and even his sisters, who were at any rate superior to him in intellect, treated him with a certain deference. He could do as he liked, and they felt themselves to be slaves, bound down by the dulness of the Longestaffe régime. His freedom was grand to their eyes, and very enviable, although they were aware that he had already so used it as to impoverish himself in the midst of his wealth.

"My dear Adolphus," said the mother, "this is so nice of you."

"I think it is rather nice," said Dolly, submitting himself to be kissed.

"Oh Dolly, whoever would have thought of seeing you?" said Sophia.

"Give him some tea," said his mother. Lady Pomona was always having tea from four o'clock till she was taken away to dress for dinner.

"I'd sooner have soda and brandy," said Dolly.

"My darling boy!"

"I didn't ask for it, and I don't expect to get it; indeed I don't want it. I only said I'd sooner have it than tea. Where's the governor?" They all looked at him with wondering eyes. There must be something going on more than they had dreamed of, when Dolly asked to see his father.

"Papa went out in the brougham immediately after lunch," said Sophia gravely.

"I'll wait a little for him," said Dolly, taking out his watch.

"Do stay and dine with us," said Lady Pomona.

"I could not do that, because I've got to go and dine with some fellow."

"Some fellow! I believe you don't know where you're going," said Georgiana.

"My fellow knows. At least he's a fool if he don't."

"Adolphus," began Lady Pomona very seriously, "I've got a plan and I want you to help me."

"I hope there isn't very much to do in it, mother."

"We're all going to Caversham, just for Whitsuntide, and we particularly want you to come."

"By George! no; I couldn't do that."

"You haven't heard half. Madame Melmotte and her daughter are coming."

"The d— they are!" ejaculated Dolly.

"Dolly!" said Sophia, "do remember where you are."

"Yes I will;—and I'll remember too where I won't be. I won't go to Caversham to meet old mother Melmotte."

"My dear boy," continued the mother, "do you know that Miss Melmotte will have twenty—thousand—a year the day she marries; and that in all probability her husband will some day be the richest man in Europe?"

"Half the fellows in London are after her," said Dolly.

"Why shouldn't you be one of them?"

"She isn't going to stay in the same house with half the fellows in London," suggested Georgiana. "If you're a mind to try it you'll have a chance which nobody else can have just at present."

"But I haven't any mind to try it. Good gracious me;—oh dear! it isn't at all in my way, mother."

"I knew he wouldn't," said Georgiana."

"It would put everything so straight," said Lady Pomona.

"They'll have to remain crooked if nothing else will put them straight. There's the governor. I heard his voice. Now for a row." Then Mr. Longestaffe entered the room.

"My dear," said Lady Pomona, "here's Adolphus come to see us." The father nodded his head at his son but said nothing. "We want him to stay and dine, but he's engaged."

"Though he doesn't know where," said Sophia.

"My fellow knows;—he keeps a book. I've got a letter, sir, ever so long, from those fellows in Lincoln's Inn. They want me to come and see you about selling something; so I've come. It's an awful bore, because I don't understand anything about it. Perhaps there isn't

anything to be sold. If so I can go away again, you know."

"You'd better come with me into the study," said the father. "We needn't disturb your mother and sisters about business." Then the squire led the way out of the room, and Dolly followed, making a woful grimace at his sisters. The three ladies sat over their tea for about half-an-hour, waiting,—not the result of the conference, for with that they did not suppose that they would be made acquainted,—but whatever signs of good or evil might be collected from the manner and appearance of the squire when he should return to them. Dolly they did not expect to see again,—probably for a month. He and the squire never did come together without quarrelling, and careless as was the young man in every other respect, he had hitherto been obdurate as to his own rights in any dealings which he had with his father. At the end of the half hour Mr. Longestaffe returned to the drawing-room, and at once pronounced the doom of the family. "My dear," he said, "we shall not return from Caversham to London this year." He struggled hard to maintain a grand dignified tranquillity as he spoke, but his voice quivered with emotion.

"Papa!" screamed Sophia.

"My dear, you don't mean it," said Lady Pomona.

"Of course papa doesn't mean it," said Georgiana rising to her feet.

"I mean it accurately and certainly," said Mr. Longestaffe. "We go to Caversham in about ten days, and we shall not return from Caversham to London this year."

"Our ball is fixed," said Lady Pomona.

"Then it must be unfixed." So saying the master

of the house left the drawing-room and descended to his study.

The three ladies, when left to deplore their fate, expressed their opinions as to the sentence which had been pronounced very strongly. But the daughters were louder in their anger than was their mother.

"He can't really mean it," said Sophia.

"He does," said Lady Pomona, with tears in her eyes.

"He must unmean it again;—that's all," said Georgiana. "Dolly has said something to him very rough, and he resents it upon us. Why did he bring us up at all if he means to take us down before the season has begun?"

"I wonder what Adolphus has said to him. Your papa is always hard upon Adolphus."

"Dolly can take care of himself," said Georgiana, "and always does do so. Dolly does not care for us."

"Not a bit," said Sophia.

"I'll tell you what you must do, mamma. You mustn't stir from this at all. You must give up going to Caversham altogether, unless he promises to bring us back. I won't stir,—unless he has me carried out of the house."

"My dear, I couldn't say that to him."

"Then I will. To go and be buried down in that place for a whole year with no one near us but the rusty old bishop and Mr. Carbury, who is rustier still. I won't stand it. There are some sort of things that one ought not to stand. If you go down I shall stay up with the Primeros. Mrs. Primero would have me I know. It wouldn't be nice of course. I don't like the Primeros. I hate the Primeros. Oh yes;—it's quite true; I know that as well as you, Sophia; they are vulgar; but not

half so vulgar, mamma, as your friend Madame Melmotte."

"That's ill-natured, Georgiana. She is not a friend of mine."

"But you're going to have her down at Caversham. I can't think what made you dream of going to Caversham just now, knowing as you do how hard papa is to manage."

"Everybody has taken to going out of town at Whitsuntide, my dear."

"No, mamma; everybody has not. People understand too well the trouble of getting up and down for that. The Primeros arn't going down. I never heard of such a thing in all my life. What does he expect is to become of us. If he wants to save money why doesn't he shut Caversham up altogether and go abroad. Caversham costs a great deal more than is spent in London, and it's the dullest house, I think, in all England."

The family party in Bruton Street that evening was not very gay. Nothing was being done, and they sat gloomily in each other's company. Whatever mutinous resolutions might be formed and carried out by the ladies of the family, they were not brought forward on that occasion. The two girls were quite silent, and would not speak to their father, and when he addressed them they answered simply by monosyllables. Lady Pomona was ill, and sat in a corner of a sofa, wiping her eyes. To her had been imparted up-stairs the purport of the conversation between Dolly and his father. Dolly had refused to consent to the sale of Pickering unless half the produce of the sale were to be given to him at once. When it had been explained to him that the sale would be desirable in order that the Caversham property might be freed from debt, which Caversham property would

eventually be his, he replied that he also had an estate of his own which was a little mortgaged and would be the better for money. The result seemed to be that Pickering could not be sold,—and, as a consequence of that, Mr. Longestaffe had determined that there should be no more London expenses that year.

The girls, when they got up to go to bed, bent over him and kissed his head, as was their custom. There was very little show of affection in the kiss. "You had better remember that what you have to do in town must be done this week," he said. They heard the words, but marched in stately silence out of the room without deigning to notice them.

CHAPTER XIV.

Carbury Manor.

"I DON'T think it quite nice, mamma; that's all. Of course if you have made up your mind to go, I must go with you."

"What on earth can be more natural than that you should go to your own cousin's house?"

"You know what I mean, mamma."

"It's done now, my dear, and I don't think there is anything at all in what you say."

This little conversation arose from Lady Carbury's announcement to her daughter of her intention of soliciting the hospitality of Carbury Manor for the Whitsun week. It was very grievous to Henrietta that she should be taken to the house of a man who was in love with her, even though he was her cousin. But she had no escape. She could not remain in town by herself, nor could she even allude to her grievance to anyone but to

her mother. Lady Carbury, in order that she might be quite safe from opposition, had posted the following letter to her cousin before she spoke to her daughter;

"Welbeck Street, 24th April, 18—.

"MY DEAR ROGER,

"We know how kind you are and how sincere, and that if what I am going to propose doesn't suit you'll say so at once. I have been working very hard,—too hard indeed, and I feel that nothing will do me so much real good as getting into the country for a day or two. Would you take us for a part of Whitsun week? We would come down on the 20th May and stay over the Sunday if you would keep us. Felix says he would run down though he would not trouble you for so long a time as we talk of staying.

"I'm sure you must have been glad to hear of his being put upon that Great American Railway Board as a Director. It opens a new sphere of life to him, and will enable him to prove that he can make himself useful. I think it was a great confidence to place in one so young.

"Of course you will say so at once if my little proposal interferes with any of your plans, but you have been so very very kind to us that I have no scruple in making it.

"Henrietta joins with me in kind love.

"Your affectionate cousin,

"MATILDA CARBURY."

There was much in this letter that disturbed and even annoyed Roger Carbury. In the first place he felt that Henrietta should not be brought to his house. Much as he loved her, dear as her presence to him always was, he hardly wished to have her at Carbury unless she

would come with a resolution to be its future mistress. In one respect he did Lady Carbury an injustice. He knew that she was anxious to forward his suit, and he thought that Henrietta was being brought to his house with that object. He had not heard that the great heiress was coming into his neighbourhood, and therefore knew nothing of Lady Carbury's scheme in that direction. He was, too, disgusted by the ill-founded pride which the mother expressed at her son's position as a director. Roger Carbury did not believe in the Railway. He did not believe in Fisker, nor in Melmotte, and certainly not in the Board generally. Paul Montague had acted in opposition to his advice in yielding to the seductions of Fisker. The whole thing was to his mind false, fraudulent, and ruinous. Of what nature could be a Company which should have itself directed by such men as Lord Alfred Grendall and Sir Felix Carbury? And then as to their great Chairman, did not everybody know, in spite of all the duchesses, that Mr. Melmotte was a gigantic swindler? Although there was more than one immediate cause for bitterness between them, Roger loved Paul Montague well and could not bear with patience the appearance of his friend's name on such a list. And now he was asked for warm congratulations because Sir Felix Carbury was one of the Board! He did not know which to despise most, Sir Felix for belonging to such a Board, or the Board for having such a director. "New sphere of life!" he said to himself. "The only proper sphere for them all would be Newgate!"

And there was another trouble. He had asked Paul Montague to come to Carbury for this special week, and Paul had accepted the invitation. With the constancy, which was perhaps his strongest characteristic, he clung

to his old affection for the man. He could not bear the idea of a permanent quarrel, though he knew that there must be a quarrel if the man interfered with his dearest hopes. He had asked him down to Carbury intending that the name of Henrietta Carbury should not be mentioned between them;—and now it was proposed to him that Henrietta Carbury should be at the Manor House at the very time of Paul's visit! He made up his mind at once that he must tell Paul not to come.

He wrote his two letters at once. That to Lady Carbury was very short. He would be delighted to see her and Henrietta at the time named,—and would be very glad should it suit Felix to come also. He did not say a word about the Board, or the young man's probable usefulness in his new sphere of life. To Montague his letter was longer. "It is always best to be open and true," he said. "Since you were kind enough to say that you would come to me, Lady Carbury has proposed to visit me just at the same time and to bring her daughter. After what has passed between us I need hardly say that I could not make you both welcome here together. It is not pleasant to me to have to ask you to postpone your visit, but I think you will not accuse me of a want of hospitality towards you." Paul wrote back to say that he was sure that there was no want of hospitality, and that he would remain in town.

Suffolk is not especially a picturesque county, nor can it be said that the scenery round Carbury was either grand or beautiful; but there were little prettinesses attached to the house itself and the grounds around it which gave it a charm of its own. The Carbury River,—so called, though at no place is it so wide but that an active schoolboy might jump across it,—runs, or rather creeps into the Waveney, and in its course is robbed by

a moat which surrounds Carbury Manor House. The moat has been rather a trouble to the proprietors, and especially so to Roger, as in these days of sanitary considerations it has been felt necessary either to keep it clean with at any rate moving water in it, or else to fill it up and abolish it altogether. That plan of abolishing it had to be thought of and was seriously discussed about ten years since; but then it was decided that such a proceeding would altogether alter the character of the house, would destroy the gardens, and would create a waste of mud all round the place which it would take years to beautify, or even to make endurable. And then an important question had been asked by an intelligent farmer who had long been a tenant on the property; "Fill un oop;—eh, eh; sooner said than doone, squoire. Where be the stoof to come from?" The squire, therefore, had given up that idea, and instead of abolishing his moat had made it prettier than ever. The high road from Bungay to Beccles ran close to the house,—so close that the gable ends of the building were separated from it only by the breadth of the moat. A short, private road, not above a hundred yards in length, led to the bridge which faced the front door. The bridge was old,—and high, with sundry architectural pretensions, and guarded by iron gates in the centre, which, however, were very rarely closed. Between the bridge and the front door there was a sweep of ground just sufficient for the turning of a carriage, and on either side of this the house was brought close to the water, so that the entrance was in a recess, or irregular quadrangle, of which the bridge and moat formed one side. At the back of the house there were large gardens screened from the road by a wall ten feet high, in which there were yew trees and cypresses said to be of wonderful

antiquity. The gardens were partly inside the moat, but chiefly beyond them, and were joined by two bridges—a foot bridge and one with a carriage way,—and there was another bridge at the end of the house furthest from the road, leading from the back door to the stables and farmyard.

The house itself had been built in the time of Charles II., when that which we call Tudor architecture was giving way to a cheaper, less picturesque, though perhaps more useful form. But Carbury Manor House, through the whole county, had the reputation of being a Tudor building. The windows were long, and for the most part low, made with strong mullions, and still contained small, old-fashioned panes; for the squire had not as yet gone to the expense of plate glass. There was one high bow window, which belonged to the library, and which looked out on to the gravel sweep, at the left of the front door as you entered it. All the other chief rooms faced upon the garden. The house itself was built of a stone that had become buff, or almost yellow with years, and was very pretty. It was still covered with tiles, as were all the attached buildings. It was only two stories high, except at the end, where the kitchens were placed and the offices, which thus rose above the other part of the edifice. The rooms throughout were low, and for the most part long and narrow, with large wide fireplaces and deep wainscotings. Taking it altogether, one would be inclined to say, that it was picturesque rather than comfortable. Such as it was its owner was very proud of it,—with a pride of which he never spoke to anyone, which he endeavoured studiously to conceal, but which had made itself known to all who knew him well. The houses of the gentry around him were superior to his in material comfort and general ac-

commodation, but to none of them belonged that thoroughly established look of old county position which belonged to Carbury. Bundlesham, where the Primeros lived, was the finest house in that part of the county, but it looked as if it had been built within the last twenty years. It was surrounded by new shrubs and new lawns, by new walls and new outhouses, and savoured of trade;—so at least thought Roger Carbury, though he never said the words. Caversham was a very large mansion, built in the early part of George III.'s reign, when men did care that things about them should be comfortable, but did not care that they should be picturesque. There was nothing at all to recommend Caversham but its size. Eardly Park, the seat of the Hepworths, had, as a park, some pretensions. Carbury possessed nothing that could be called a park, the enclosures beyond the gardens being merely so many home paddocks. But the house of Eardly was ugly and bad. The Bishop's palace was an excellent gentleman's residence, but then that too was comparatively modern, and had no peculiar features of its own. Now Carbury Manor House was peculiar, and in the eyes of its owner was pre-eminently beautiful.

It often troubled him to think what would come of the place when he was gone. He was at present forty years old, and was perhaps as healthy a man as you could find in the whole county. Those around who had known him as he grew into manhood among them, especially the farmers of the neighbourhood, still regarded him as a young man. They spoke of him at the country fairs as the young squire. When in his happiest moods he could be almost a boy, and he still had something of old-fashioned boyish reverence for his elders. But of late there had grown up a great care within his breast,—a care which does not often, perhaps, in these days

bear so heavily on men's hearts as it used to do. He had asked his cousin to marry him,—having assured himself with certainty that he did love her better than any other woman,—and she had declined. She had refused him more than once, and he believed her implicitly when she told him that she could not love him. He had a way of believing people, especially when such belief was opposed to his own interests, and had none of that self-confidence which makes a man think that if opportunity be allowed him he can win a woman even in spite of herself. But if it were fated that he should not succeed with Henrietta, then,—so he felt assured,—no marriage would now be possible to him. In that case he must look out for an heir, and could regard himself simply as a stop-gap among the Carburys. In that case he could never enjoy the luxury of doing the best he could with the property in order that a son of his own might enjoy it.

Now Sir Felix was the next heir. Roger was hampered by no entail, and could leave every acre of the property as he pleased. In one respect the natural succession to it by Sir Felix would generally be considered fortunate. It had happened that a title had been won in a lower branch of the family, and were this succession to take place the family title and the family property would go together. No doubt to Sir Felix himself such an arrangement would seem to be the most proper thing in the world,—as it would also to Lady Carbury were it not that she looked to Carbury Manor as the future home of another child. But to all this the present owner of the property had very strong objections. It was not only that he thought ill of the baronet himself,—so ill as to feel thoroughly convinced that no good could come from that quarter,—but he thought ill also of the

baronetcy itself. Sir Patrick, to his thinking, had been altogether unjustifiable in accepting an enduring title, knowing that he would leave behind him no property adequate for its support. A baronet, so thought Roger Carbury, should be a rich man, rich enough to grace the rank which he assumed to wear. A title, according to Roger's doctrine on such subjects, could make no man a gentleman, but, if improperly worn, might degrade a man who would otherwise be a gentleman. He thought that a gentleman, born and bred, acknowledged as such without doubt, could not be made more than a gentleman by all the titles which the Queen could give. With these old-fashioned notions Roger hated the title which had fallen upon a branch of his family. He certainly would not leave his property to support the title which Sir Felix unfortunately possessed. But Sir Felix was the natural heir, and this man felt himself constrained, almost as by some divine law, to see that his land went by natural descent. Though he was in no degree fettered as to its disposition, he did not presume himself to have more than a life interest in the estate. It was his duty to see that it went from Carbury to Carbury as long as there was a Carbury to hold it, and especially his duty to see that it should go from his hands, at his death, unimpaired in extent or value. There was no reason why he should himself die for the next twenty or thirty years,—but were he to die Sir Felix would undoubtedly dissipate the acres, and then there would be an end of Carbury. But in such case he, Roger Carbury, would at any rate have done his duty. He knew that no human arrangements can be fixed, let the care in making them be ever so great. To his thinking it would be better that the estate should be dissipated by a Carbury than held together by a stranger.

He would stick to the old name while there was one to bear it, and to the old family while a member of it was left. So thinking he had already made his will, leaving the entire property to the man whom of all others he most despised, should he himself die without child.

In the afternoon of the day on which Lady Carbury was expected, he wandered about the place thinking of all this. How infinitely better it would be that he should have an heir of his own. How wonderfully beautiful would the world be to him if at last his cousin would consent to be his wife! How wearily insipid must it be if no such consent could be obtained from her. And then he thought much of her welfare too. In very truth he did not like Lady Carbury. He saw through her character, judging her with almost absolute accuracy. The woman was affectionate, seeking good things for others rather than for herself; but she was essentially worldly, believing that good could come out of evil, that falsehood might in certain conditions be better than truth, that shams and pretences might do the work of true service, that a strong house might be built upon the sand! It was lamentable to him that the girl he loved should be subjected to this teaching, and live in an atmosphere so burdened with falsehood. Would not the touch of pitch at last defile her? In his heart of hearts he believed that she loved Paul Montague; and of Paul himself he was beginning to fear evil. What but a sham could be a man who consented to pretend to sit as one of a Board of Directors to manage an enormous enterprise with such colleagues as Lord Alfred Grendall and Sir Felix Carbury, under the absolute control of such a one as Mr. Augustus Melmotte? Was not this building a house upon the sand with a vengeance? What a life it would be for Henrietta Carbury were she to marry a

man striving to become rich without labour and without capital, and who might one day be wealthy and the next a beggar,—a city adventurer, who of all men was to him the vilest and most dishonest? He strove to think well of Paul Montague, but such was the life which he feared the young man was preparing for himself.

Then he went into the house and wandered up through the rooms which the two ladies were to occupy. As their host, a host without a wife or mother or sister, it was his duty to see that things were comfortable, but it may be doubted whether he would have been so careful had the mother been coming alone. In the smaller room of the two the hangings were all white, and the room was sweet with May flowers; and he brought a white rose from the hot-house, and placed it in a glass on the dressing table. Surely she would know who put it there.

Then he stood at the open window, looking down upon the lawn, gazing vacantly for half an hour, till he heard the wheels of the carriage before the front door. During that half hour he resolved that he would try again as though there had as yet been no repulse.

CHAPTER XV.

"You should remember that I am his Mother."

"THIS is so kind of you," said Lady Carbury, grasping her cousin's hand as she got out of the carriage.

"The kindness is on your part," said Roger.

"I felt so much before I dared to ask you to take us. But I did so long to get into the country, and I do so love Carbury. And—and——"

"Where should a Carbury go to escape from London smoke, but to the old house? I am afraid Henrietta will find it dull."

"Oh no," said Hetta smiling. "You ought to remember that I am never dull in the country."

"The bishop and Mrs. Yeld are coming here to dine to-morrow,—and the Hepworths."

"I shall be so glad to meet the bishop once more," said Lady Carbury.

"I think everybody must be glad to meet him, he is such a dear, good fellow, and his wife is just as good. And there is another gentleman coming whom you have never seen."

"A new neighbour?"

"Yes,—a new neighbour;—Father John Barham, who has come to Beccles as priest. He has got a little cottage about a mile from here, in this parish, and does duty both at Beccles and Bungay. I used to know something of his family."

"He is a gentleman then?"

"Certainly he is a gentleman. He took his degree at Oxford, and then became what we call a pervert, and

what I suppose they call a convert. He has not got a shilling in the world beyond what they pay him as a priest, which I take it amounts to about as much as the wages of a day labourer. He told me the other day that he was absolutely forced to buy second-hand clothes."

"How shocking!" said Lady Carbury, holding up her hands.

"He didn't seem to be at all shocked at telling it. We have got to be quite friends."

"Will the bishop like to meet him?"

"Why should not the bishop like to meet him? I've told the bishop all about him, and the bishop particularly wishes to know him. He won't hurt the bishop. But you and Hetta will find it very dull."

"I shan't find it dull, Mr. Carbury," said Henrietta.

"It was to escape from the eternal parties that we came down here," said Lady Carbury. She had nevertheless been anxious to hear what guests were expected at the Manor House. Sir Felix had promised to come down on Saturday, with the intention of returning on Monday, and Lady Carbury had hoped that some visiting might be arranged between Caversham and the Manor House, so that her son might have the full advantage of his closeness to Marie Melmotte.

"I have asked the Longestaffes for Monday," said Roger.

"They are down here then?"

"I think they arrived yesterday. There is always a flustering breeze in the air and a perturbation generally through the county when they come or go, and I think I perceived the effects about four in the afternoon. They won't come, I dare say."

"Why not?"

"They never do. They have probably a house full of guests, and they know that my accommodation is limited. I've no doubt they'll ask us on Tuesday or Wednesday, and if you like we will go."

"I know they are to have guests," said Lady Carbury.

"What guests?"

"The Melmottes are coming to them." Lady Carbury, as she made the announcement, felt that her voice and countenance and self-possession were failing her, and that she could not mention the thing as she would any matter that was indifferent to her.

"The Melmottes coming to Caversham!" said Roger, looking at Henrietta, who blushed with shame as she remembered that she had been brought into her lover's house solely in order that her brother might have an opportunity of seeing Marie Melmotte in the country.

"Oh yes,—Madame Melmotte told me. I take it they are very intimate."

"Mr. Longestaffe ask the Melmottes to visit him at Caversham!"

"Why not?"

"I should almost as soon have believed that I myself might have been induced to ask them here."

"I fancy, Roger, that Mr. Longestaffe does want a little pecuniary assistance."

"And he condescends to get it in this way! I suppose it will make no difference soon whom one knows, and whom one doesn't. Things arn't as they were, of course, and never will be again. Perhaps it's all for the better; —I won't say it isn't. But I should have thought that such a man as Mr. Longestaffe might have kept such another man as Mr. Melmotte out of his wife's drawing-room." Henrietta became redder than ever. Even Lady Carbury flushed up, as she remembered that Roger

Carbury knew that she had taken her daughter to Madame Melmotte's ball. He thought of this himself as soon as the words were spoken, and then tried to make some half apology. "I don't approve of them in London, you know; but I think they are very much worse in the country."

Then there was a movement. The ladies were shown into their rooms, and Roger again went out into the garden. He began to feel that he understood it all. Lady Carbury had come down to his house in order that she might be near the Melmottes! There was something in this which he felt it difficult not to resent. It was for no love of him that she was there. He had felt that Henrietta ought not to have been brought to his house; but he could have forgiven that, because her presence there was a charm to him. He could have forgiven that, even while he was thinking that her mother had brought her there with the object of disposing of her. If it were so, the mother's object would be the same as his own, and such a manœuvre he could pardon, though he could not approve. His self-love had to some extent been gratified. But now he saw that he and his house had been simply used in order that a vile project of marrying two vile people to each other might be furthered!

As he was thinking of all this, Lady Carbury came out to him in the garden. She had changed her travelling dress, and made herself pretty, as she well knew how to do. And now she dressed her face in her sweetest smiles. Her mind, also, was full of the Melmottes, and she wished to explain to her stern, unbending cousin all the good that might come to her and hers by an alliance with the heiress. "I can understand, Roger," she said, taking his arm, "that you should not like those people."

"What people!"

"The Melmottes."

"I don't dislike them. How should I dislike people that I never saw? I dislike those who seek their society simply because they have the reputation of being rich."

"Meaning me."

"No; not meaning you. I don't dislike you, as you know very well, though I do dislike the fact that you should run after these people. I was thinking of the Longestaffes then."

"Do you suppose, my friend, that I run after them for my own gratification? Do you think that I go to their house because I find pleasure in their magnificence; or that I follow them down here for any good that they will do me?"

"I would not follow them at all."

"I will go back if you bid me, but I must first explain what I mean. You know my son's condition,—better, I fear, than he does himself." Roger nodded assent to this, but said nothing. "What is he to do? The only chance for a young man in his position is that he should marry a girl with money. He is good-looking; you can't deny that."

"Nature has done enough for him."

"We must take him as he is. He was put into the army very young, and was very young when he came into possession of his own small fortune. He might have done better; but how many young men placed in such temptations do well? As it is, he has nothing left."

"I fear not."

"And therefore is it not imperative that he should marry a girl with money?"

"I call that stealing a girl's money, Lady Carbury."

"Oh, Roger, how hard you are!"

"A man must be hard or soft,—which is best?"

"With women I think that a little softness has the most effect. I want to make you understand this about the Melmottes. It stands to reason that the girl will not marry Felix unless she loves him."

"But does he love her?"

"Why should he not? Is a girl to be debarred from being loved because she has money? Of course she looks to be married, and why should she not have Felix if she likes him best. Cannot you sympathize with my anxiety so to place him that he shall not be a disgrace to the name and to the family?"

"We had better not talk about the family, Lady Carbury."

"But I think so much about it."

"You will never get me to say that I think the family will be benefited by a marriage with the daughter of Mr. Melmotte. I look upon him as dirt in the gutter. To me, in my old-fashioned way, all his money, if he has it, can make no difference. When there is a question of marriage people at any rate should know something of each other. Who knows anything of this man? Who can be sure that she is his daughter?"

"He would give her her fortune when she married."

"Yes; it all comes to that. Men say openly that he is an adventurer and a swindler. No one pretends to think that he is a gentleman. There is a consciousness among all who speak of him that he amasses his money not by honest trade, but by unknown tricks,—as does a card sharper. He is one whom we would not admit into our kitchens, much less to our tables, on the score of his own merits. But because he has learned the art of making

money, we not only put up with him, but settle upon his carcase as so many birds of prey."

"Do you mean that Felix should not marry the girl, even if they love each other?"

He shook his head in disgust, feeling sure that any idea of love on the part of the young man was a sham and a pretence, not only as regarded him, but also his mother. He could not quite declare this, and yet he desired that she should understand that he thought so. "I have nothing more to say about it," he continued. "Had it gone on in London I should have said nothing. It is no affair of mine. When I am told that the girl is in the neighbourhood, at such a house as Caversham, and that Felix is coming here in order that he may be near to his prey, and when I am asked to be a party to the thing, I can only say what I think. Your son would be welcome to my house, because he is your son and my cousin, little as I approve his mode of life; but I could have wished that he had chosen some other place for the work that he has on hand."

"If you wish it, Roger, we will return to London. I shall find it hard to explain to Hetta;—but we will go."

"No; I certainly do not wish that."

"But you have said such hard things! How are we to stay? You speak of Felix as though he were all bad." She looked at him hoping to get from him some contradiction of this, some retractation, some kindly word; but it was what he did think, and he had nothing to say. She could bear much. She was not delicate as to censure implied, or even expressed. She had endured rough usage before, and was prepared to endure more. Had he found fault with herself, or with Henrietta, she would have put up with it, for the sake of benefits to come,—would have forgiven it the more easily because perhaps

it might not have been deserved. But for her son she was prepared to fight. If she did not defend him, who would? "I am grieved, Roger, that we should have troubled you with our visit, but I think that we had better go. You are very harsh, and it crushes me."

"I have not meant to be harsh."

"You say that Felix is seeking for his—prey, and that he is to be brought here to be near——his prey. What can be more harsh than that? At any rate, you should remember that I am his mother."

She expressed her sense of injury very well. Roger began to be ashamed of himself, and to think that he had spoken unkind words. And yet he did not know how to recall them. "If I have hurt you, I regret it much."

"Of course you have hurt me. I think I will go in now. How very hard the world is! I came here thinking to find peace and sunshine, and there has come a storm at once."

"You asked me about the Melmottes, and I was obliged to speak. You cannot think that I meant to offend you." They walked on in silence till they had reached the door leading from the garden into the house,—and here he stopped her. "If I have been over hot with you, let me beg your pardon." She smiled and bowed; but her smile was not one of forgiveness; and then she essayed to pass on into the house. "Pray do not speak of going, Lady Carbury."

"I think I will go to my room now. My head aches so that I can hardly stand."

It was late in the afternoon,—about six,—and according to his daily custom he should have gone round to the offices to see his men as they came from their work, but he stood still for a few moments on the spot

where Lady Carbury had left him and went slowly across the lawn to the bridge and there seated himself on the parapet. Could it really be that she meant to leave his house in anger and to take her daughter with her? Was it thus that he was to part with the one human being in the world that he loved? He was a man who thought much of the duties of hospitality, feeling that a man in his own house was bound to exercise a courtesy towards his guests sweeter, softer, more gracious than the world required elsewhere. And of all guests those of his own name were the best entitled to such courtesy at Carbury. He held the place in trust for the use of others. But if there were one among all others to whom the house should be a house of refuge from care, not an abode of trouble, on whose behalf were it possible he would make the very air softer, and the flowers sweeter than their wont, to whom he would declare, were such words possible to his tongue, that of him and of his house, and of all things there she was the mistress, whether she would condescend to love him or no,—that one was his cousin Hetta. And now he had been told by his guest that he had been so rough to her that she and her daughter must return to London!

And he could not acquit himself. He knew that he had been rough. He had said very hard words. It was true that he could not have expressed his meaning without hard words, nor have repressed his meaning without self-reproach. But in his present mood he could not comfort himself by justifying himself. She had told him that he ought to have remembered that Felix was her son; and as she spoke she had acted well the part of an outraged mother. His heart was so soft that though he knew the woman to be false and the son to be worthless, he utterly condemned himself. Look where he

would there was no comfort. When he had sat half-an-hour upon the bridge he turned towards the house to dress for dinner,—and to prepare himself for an apology, if any apology might be accepted. At the door, standing in the doorway as though waiting for him, he met his cousin Hetta. She had on her bosom the rose he had placed in her room, and as he approached her he thought that there was more in her eyes of graciousness towards him than he had ever seen there before.

"Mr. Carbury," she said, "mamma is so unhappy!"

"I fear that I have offended her."

"It is not that, but that you should be so,—so angry about Felix."

"I am vexed with myself that I have vexed her,—more vexed than I can tell you."

"She knows how good you are."

"No, I'm not. I was very bad just now. She was so offended with me that she talked of going back to London." He paused for her to speak, but Hetta had no words ready for the moment. "I should be wretched indeed if you and she were to leave my house in anger."

"I do not think she will do that."

"And you?"

"I am not angry. I should never dare to be angry with you. I only wish that Felix would be better. They say that young men have to be bad, and that they do get to be better as they grow older. He is something in the city now, a director they call him, and mamma thinks that the work will be of service to him." Roger could express no hope in this direction or even look as though he approved of the directorship. "I don't see why he should not try at any rate."

"Dear Hetta, I only wish he were like you."

"Girls are so different, you know."

It was not till late in the evening, long after dinner, that he made his apology in form to Lady Carbury; but he did make it, and at last it was accepted. "I think I was rough to you, talking about Felix," he said,—"and I beg your pardon."

"You were energetic, that was all."

"A gentleman should never be rough to a lady, and a man should never be rough to his own guests. I hope you will forgive me." She answered him by putting out her hand and smiling on him; and so the quarrel was over.

Lady Carbury understood the full extent of her triumph, and was enabled by her disposition to use it thoroughly. Felix might now come down to Carbury, and go over from thence to Caversham, and prosecute his wooing, and the master of Carbury could make no further objection. And Felix, if he would come, would not now be snubbed. Roger would understand that he was constrained to courtesy by the former severity of his language. Such points as these Lady Carbury never missed. He understood it too, and though he was soft and gracious in his bearing, endeavouring to make his house as pleasant as he could to his two guests, he felt that he had been cheated out of his undoubted right to disapprove of all connection with the Melmottes. In the course of the evening there came a note,—or rather a bundle of notes,—from Caversham. That addressed to Roger was in the form of a letter. Lady Pomona was sorry to say that the Longestaffe party were prevented from having the pleasure of dining at Carbury Hall by the fact that they had a house full of guests. Lady Pomona hoped that Mr. Carbury and his relatives, who, Lady Pomona heard, were with him at the Hall, would

do the Longestaffes the pleasure of dining at Caversham either on the Monday or Tuesday following, as might best suit the Carbury plans. That was the purport of Lady Pomona's letter to Roger Carbury. Then there were cards of invitation for Lady Carbury and her daughter, and also for Sir Felix.

Roger, as he read his own note, handed the others over to Lady Carbury, and then asked her what she would wish to have done. The tone of his voice, as he spoke, grated on her ear, as there was something in it of his former harshness. But she knew how to use her triumph. "I should like to go," she said.

"I certainly shall not go," he replied; "but there will be no difficulty whatever in sending you over. You must answer at once, because their servant is waiting."

"Monday will be best," she said; "——that is, if nobody is coming here."

"There will be nobody here."

"I suppose I had better say that I, and Hetta,—— and Felix will accept their invitation."

"I can make no suggestion," said Roger, thinking how delightful it would be if Henrietta could remain with him; how objectionable it was that Henrietta should be taken to Caversham to meet the Melmottes. Poor Hetta herself could say nothing. She certainly did not wish to meet the Melmottes, nor did she wish to dine, alone, with her cousin Roger.

"That will be best," said Lady Carbury after a moment's thought. "It is very good of you to let us go, and to send us."

"Of course you will do here just as you please," he replied. But there was still that tone in his voice which Lady Carbury feared. A quarter of an hour later the Caversham servant was on his way home with two letters,

—the one from Roger expressing his regret that he could not accept Lady Pomona's invitation, and the other from Lady Carbury declaring that she and her son and daughter would have great pleasure in dining at Caversham on the Monday.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Bishop and the Priest.

THE afternoon on which Lady Carbury arrived at her cousin's house had been very stormy. Roger Carbury had been severe, and Lady Carbury had suffered under his severity,—or had at least so well pretended to suffer as to leave on Roger's mind a strong impression that he had been cruel to her. She had then talked of going back at once to London, and when consenting to remain, had remained with a very bad feminine headache. She had altogether carried her point, but had done so in a storm. The next morning was very calm. That question of meeting the Melmottes had been settled, and there was no need for speaking of them again. Roger went out by himself about the farm, immediately after breakfast, having told the ladies that they could have the waggonnette when they pleased. "I'm afraid you'll find it tiresome driving about our lanes," he said. Lady Carbury assured him that she was never dull when left alone with books. Just as he was starting he went into the garden and plucked a rose which he brought to Henrietta. He only smiled as he gave it her, and then went his way. He had resolved that he would say nothing to her of his suit till Monday. If he could prevail with her then he would ask her to remain with him

when her mother and brother would be going out to dine at Caversham. She looked up into his face as she took the rose and thanked him in a whisper. She fully appreciated the truth, and honour, and honesty of his character, and could have loved him so dearly as her cousin if he would have contented himself with such cousinly love! She was beginning, within her heart, to take his side against her mother and brother, and to feel that he was the safest guide that she could have. But how could she be guided by a lover whom she did not love?

"I am afraid, my dear, we shall have a bad time of it here," said Lady Carbury.

"Why so, mamma?"

"It will be so dull. Your cousin is the best friend in all the world, and would make as good a husband as could be picked out of all the gentlemen of England; but in his present mood with me he is not a comfortable host. What nonsense he did talk about the Melmottes!"

"I don't suppose, mamma, that Mr. and Mrs. Melmotte can be nice people."

"Why shouldn't they be as nice as anybody else? Pray, Henrietta, don't let us have any of that nonsense from you. When it comes from the superhuman virtue of poor dear Roger it has to be borne, but I beg that you will not copy him."

"Mamma, I think that is unkind."

"And I shall think it very unkind if you take upon yourself to abuse people who are able and willing to set poor Felix on his legs. A word from you might undo all that we are doing."

"What word?"

"What word? Any word! If you have any influence

with your brother you should use it in inducing him to hurry this on. I am sure the girl is willing enough. She did refer him to her father."

"Then why does he not go to Mr. Melmotte?"

"I suppose he is delicate about it on the score of money. If Roger could only let it be understood that Felix is the heir to this place, and that some day he will be Sir Felix Carbury of Carbury, I don't think there would be any difficulty even with old Melmotte."

"How could he do that, mamma?"

"If your cousin were to die as he is now, it would be so. Your brother would be his heir."

"You should not think of such a thing, mamma."

"Why do you dare to tell me what I am to think? Am I not to think of my own son? Is he not to be dearer to me than any one? And what I say, is so. If Roger were to die to-morrow he would be Sir Felix Carbury of Carbury."

"But, mamma, he will live and have a family. Why should he not?"

"You say he is so old that you will not look at him."

"I never said so. When we were joking, I said he was old. You know I did not mean that he was too old to get married. Men a great deal older get married every day."

"If you don't accept him he will never marry. He is a man of that kind,—so stiff and stubborn and old fashioned that nothing will change him. He will go on boodying over it, till he will become an old misanthrope. If you would take him I would be quite contented. You are my child as well as Felix. But if you mean to be obstinate I do wish that the Melmottes should be made to understand that the property and title and name of

the place will all go together. It will be so, and why should not Felix have the advantage?"

"Who is to say it?"

"Ah;—that's where it is. Roger is so violent and prejudiced that one cannot get him to speak rationally."

"Oh, mamma;—you wouldn't suggest it to him;—that this place is to go to—Felix, when he—is dead!"

"It would not kill him a day sooner."

"You would not dare to do it, mamma."

"I would dare to do anything for my children. But you need not look like that, Henrietta. I am not going to say anything to him of the kind. He is not quick enough to understand of what infinite service he might be to us without in any way hurting himself." Henrietta would fain have answered that their cousin was quick enough for anything, but was by far too honest to take part in such a scheme as that proposed. She refrained, however, and was silent. There was no sympathy on the matter between her and her mother. She was beginning to understand the tortuous mazes of manœuvres in which her mother's mind had learned to work, and to dislike and almost to despise them. But she felt it to be her duty to abstain from rebukes.

In the afternoon Lady Carbury, alone, had herself driven into Beccles that she might telegraph to her son. "You are to dine at Caversham on Monday. Come on Saturday if you can. She is there." Lady Carbury had many doubts as to the wording of this message. The female in the office might too probably understand who was the "She," who was spoken of as being at Caversham, and might understand also the project, and speak of it publicly. But then it was essential that Felix should know how great and certain was the opportunity afforded to him. He had promised

to come on Saturday and return on Monday,—and, unless warned, would too probably stick to his plan and throw over the Longestaffes and their dinner-party. Again if he were told to come simply for the Monday, he would throw over the chance of wooing her on the Sunday. It was Lady Carbury's desire to get him down for as long a period as was possible, and nothing surely would so tend to bring him and to keep him, as a knowledge that the heiress was already in the neighbourhood. Then she returned, and shut herself up in her bedroom, and worked for an hour or two at a paper which she was writing for the "Breakfast Table." Nobody should ever accuse her justly of idleness. And afterwards, as she walked by herself round and round the garden, she revolved in her mind the scheme of a new book. Whatever might happen she would persevere. If the Carburys were unfortunate their misfortunes should come from no fault of hers. Henrietta passed the whole day alone. She did not see her cousin from breakfast till he appeared in the drawing-room before dinner. But she was thinking of him during every minute of the day,—how good he was, how honest, how thoroughly entitled to demand at any rate kindness at her hand! Her mother had spoken of him as of one who might be regarded as all but dead and buried, simply because of his love for her. Could it be true that his constancy was such that he would never marry unless she would take his hand? She came to think of him with more tenderness than she had ever felt before, but, yet, she would not tell herself she loved him. It might, perhaps, be her duty to give herself to him without loving him,—because he was so good; but she was sure that she did not love him.

In the evening the bishop came, and his wife, Mrs.

Yeld, and the Hepworths of Eardly, and Father John Barham, the Beccles priest. The party consisted of eight, which is, perhaps, the best number for a mixed gathering of men and women at a dinner-table,—especially if there be no mistress whose prerogative and duty it is to sit opposite to the master. In this case Mr. Hepworth faced the giver of the feast, the bishop and the priest were opposite to each other, and the ladies graced the four corners. Roger, though he spoke of such things to no one, turned them over much in his mind, believing it to be the duty of a host to administer in all things to the comfort of his guests. In the drawing-room he had been especially courteous to the young priest, introducing him first to the bishop and his wife, and then to his cousins. Henrietta watched him through the whole evening, and told herself that he was a very mirror of courtesy in his own house. She had seen it all before, no doubt; but she had never watched him as she now watched him since her mother had told her that he would die wifeless and childless because she would not be his wife and the mother of his children.

The bishop was a man sixty years of age, very healthy and handsome, with hair just becoming grey, clear eyes, a kindly mouth, and something of a double chin. He was all but six feet high, with a broad chest, large hands, and legs which seemed to have been made for clerical breeches and clerical stockings. He was a man of fortune outside his bishopric; and, as he never went up to London, and had no children on whom to spend his money, he was able to live as a nobleman in the country. He did live as a nobleman, and was very popular. Among the poor around him he was idolized, and by such clergy of his diocese as were not enthusiastic in their theology either on the one side or on the

other, he was regarded as a model bishop. By the very high and the very low,—by those rather who regarded ritualism as being either heavenly or devilish,—he was looked upon as a time-server, because he would not put to sea in either of those boats. He was an unselfish man, who loved his neighbour as himself, and forgave all trespasses, and thanked God for his daily bread from his heart, and prayed heartily to be delivered from temptation. But I doubt whether he was competent to teach a creed,—or even to hold one, if it be necessary that a man should understand and define his creed before he can hold it. Whether he was free from, or whether he was scared by, any inward misgivings, who shall say? If there were such he never whispered a word of them even to the wife of his bosom. From the tone of his voice and the look of his eye, you would say that he was unscathed by that agony which doubt on such a matter would surely bring to a man so placed. And yet it was observed of him that he never spoke of his faith, or entered into arguments with men as to the reasons on which he had based it. He was diligent in preaching,—moral sermons that were short, pithy, and useful. He was never weary in furthering the welfare of his clergymen. His house was open to them and to their wives. The edifice of every church in his diocese was a care to him. He laboured at schools, and was zealous in improving the social comforts of the poor; but he was never known to declare to man or woman that the human soul must live or die for ever according to its faith. Perhaps there was no bishop in England more loved or more useful in his diocese than the Bishop of Elmham.

A man more antagonistic to the bishop than Father John Barham, the lately appointed Roman Catholic priest at Beccles, it would be impossible to conceive;—and yet

they were both eminently good men. Father John was not above five feet nine in height, but so thin, so meagre, so wasted in appearance, that, unless when he stooped, he was taken to be tall. He had thick dark brown hair, which was cut short in accordance with the usage of his Church; but which he so constantly ruffled by the action of his hands, that, though short, it seemed to be wild and uncombed. In his younger days, when long locks straggled over his forehead, he had acquired a habit, while talking energetically, of rubbing them back with his finger, which he had not since dropped. In discussions he would constantly push back his hair, and then sit with his hand fixed on the top of his head. He had a high, broad forehead, enormous blue eyes, a thin, long nose, cheeks very thin and hollow, a handsome large mouth, and a strong square chin. He was utterly without worldly means, except those which came to him from the ministry of his church, and which did not suffice to find him food and raiment; but no man ever lived more indifferent to such matters than Father John Barham. He had been the younger son of an English country gentleman of small fortune, had been sent to Oxford that he might hold a family living, and on the eve of his ordination had declared himself a Roman Catholic. His family had resented this bitterly, but had not quarrelled with him till he had drawn a sister with him. When banished from the house he had still striven to achieve the conversion of other sisters by his letters, and was now absolutely an alien from his father's heart and care. But of this he never complained. It was a part of the plan of his life that he should suffer for his faith. Had he been able to change his creed without incurring persecution, worldly degradation, and poverty, his own conversion would not have been to him comfortable and

satisfactory as it was. He considered that his father, as a Protestant,—and in his mind Protestant and heathen were all the same,—had been right to quarrel with him. But he loved his father, and was endless in prayer, wearying his saints with supplications, that his father might see the truth and be as he was.

To him it was everything that a man should believe and obey,—that he should abandon his own reason to the care of another or of others, and allow himself to be guided in all things by authority. Faith being sufficient and of itself all in all, moral conduct could be nothing to a man, except as a testimony of faith; for to him, whose belief was true enough to produce obedience, moral conduct would certainly be added. The dogmas of his Church were to Father Barham a real religion, and he would teach them in season and out of season, always ready to commit himself to the task of proving their truth, afraid of no enemy, not even fearing the hostility which his perseverance would create. He had but one duty before him,—to do his part towards bringing over the world to his faith. It might be that with the toil of his whole life he should convert but one; that he should but half convert one; that he should do no more than disturb the thoughts of one so that future conversion might be possible. But even that would be work done. He would sow the seed if it might be so; but if it were not given to him to do that, he would at any rate plough the ground.

He had come to Beccles lately, and Roger Carbury had found out that he was a gentleman by birth and education. Roger had found out also that he was very poor, and had consequently taken him by the hand. The young priest had not hesitated to accept his neighbour's hospitality, having on one occasion laughingly protested

that he should be delighted to dine at Carbury, as he was much in want of a dinner. He had accepted presents from the garden and the poultry yard, declaring that he was too poor to refuse anything. The apparent frankness of the man about himself had charmed Roger, and the charm had not been seriously disturbed when Father Barham, on one winter evening in the parlour at Carbury, had tried his hand at converting his host. "I have the most thorough respect for your religion," Roger had said; "but it would not suit me." The priest had gone on with his logic; if he could not sow the seed he might plough the ground. This had been repeated two or three times, and Roger had begun to feel it to be disagreeable. But the man was in earnest, and such earnestness commanded respect. And Roger was quite sure that though he might be bored, he could not be injured by such teaching. Then it occurred to him one day that he had known the Bishop of Elmham intimately for a dozen years, and had never heard from the bishop's mouth,—except when in the pulpit,—a single word of religious teaching; whereas this man, who was a stranger to him, divided from him by the very fact of his creed, was always talking to him about his faith. Roger Carbury was not a man given to much deep thinking, but he felt that the bishop's manner was the pleasanter of the two.

Lady Carbury at dinner was all smiles and pleasantness. No one looking at her, or listening to her, could think that her heart was sore with many troubles. She sat between the bishop and her cousin, and was skilful enough to talk to each without neglecting the other. She had known the bishop before, and had on one occasion spoken to him of her soul. The first tone of the good man's reply had convinced her of her error, and she

never repeated it. To Mr. Alf she commonly talked of her mind; to Mr. Broune of her heart; to Mr. Booker of her body—and its wants. She was quite ready to talk of her soul on a proper occasion, but she was much too wise to thrust the subject even on a bishop. Now she was full of the charms of Carbury and its neighbourhood. "Yes, indeed," said the bishop, "I think Suffolk is a very nice county; and as we are only a mile or two from Norfolk, I'll say as much for Norfolk too. 'It's an ill bird that fouls its own nest.'"

"I like a county in which there is something left of county feeling," said Lady Carbury. "Staffordshire and Warwickshire, Cheshire and Lancashire have become great towns, and have lost all local distinctions."

"We still keep our name and reputation," said the bishop; "Silly Suffolk!"

"But that was never deserved."

"As much, perhaps, as other general epithets. I think we are a sleepy people. We've got no coal, you see, and no iron. We have no beautiful scenery, like the lake country,—no rivers great for fishing, like Scotland,—no hunting grounds, like the shires."

"Partridges!" pleaded Lady Carbury, with pretty energy.

"Yes; we have partridges, fine churches, and the herring fishery. We shall do very well if too much is not expected of us. We can't increase and multiply as they do in the great cities."

"I like this part of England so much the best for that very reason. What is the use of a crowded population?"

"The earth has to be peopled, Lady Carbury."

"Oh, yes," said her ladyship, with some little reverence added to her voice, feeling that the bishop was

probably adverting to a divine arrangement. "The world must be peopled; but for myself I like the country better than the town."

"So do I," said Roger; "and I like Suffolk. The people are hearty, and radicalism is not quite so rampant as it is elsewhere. The poor people touch their hats, and the rich people think of the poor. There is something left among us of old English habits."

"That is so nice," said Lady Carbury.

"Something left of old English ignorance," said the bishop. "All the same I dare say we're improving, like the rest of the world. What beautiful flowers you have here, Mr. Carbury! At any rate, we can grow flowers in Suffolk."

Mrs. Yeld, the bishop's wife, was sitting next to the priest, and was in truth somewhat afraid of her neighbour. She was, perhaps, a little stauncher than her husband in Protestantism; and though she was willing to admit that Mr. Barham might not have ceased to be a gentleman when he became a Roman Catholic priest, she was not quite sure that it was expedient for her or her husband to have much to do with him. Mr. Carbury had not taken them unawares. Notice had been given that the priest was to be there, and the bishop had declared that he would be very happy to meet the priest. But Mrs. Yeld had had her misgivings. She never ventured to insist on her opinion after the bishop had expressed his; but she had an idea that right was right, and wrong wrong,—and that Roman Catholics were wrong, and therefore ought to be put down. And she thought also that if there were no priests there would be no Roman Catholics. Mr. Barham was, no doubt, a man of good family, which did make a difference.

Mr. Barham always made his approaches very gradu-

ally. The taciturn humility with which he commenced his operations was in exact proportion to the enthusiastic volubility of his advanced intimacy. Mrs. Yeld thought that it became her to address to him a few civil words, and he replied to her with a shamefaced modesty that almost overcame her dislike to his profession. She spoke of the poor of Beccles, being very careful to allude only to their material position. There was too much beer drank, no doubt, and the young women would have finery. Where did they get the money to buy those wonderful bonnets which appeared every Sunday? Mr. Barham was very meek, and agreed to everything that was said. No doubt he had a plan ready formed for inducing Mrs. Yeld to have mass said regularly within her husband's palace, but he did not even begin to bring it about on this occasion. It was not till he made some apparently chance allusion to the superior church-attending qualities of "our people," that Mrs. Yeld drew herself up and changed the conversation by observing that there had been a great deal of rain lately.

When the ladies were gone the bishop at once put himself in the way of conversation with the priest, and asked questions as to the morality of Beccles. It was evidently Mr. Barham's opinion that "his people" were more moral than other people, though very much poorer. "But the Irish always drink," said Mr. Hepworth.

"Not so much as the English, I think," said the priest. "And you are not to suppose that we are all Irish. Of my flock the greater proportion are English."

"It is astonishing how little we know of our neighbours," said the bishop. "Of course I am aware that there are a certain number of persons of your persuasion round about us. Indeed, I could give the exact number in this diocese. But in my own immediate neighbour-

hood I could not put my hand upon any families which I know to be Roman Catholic."

"It is not, my lord, because there are none."

"Of course not. It is because, as I say, I do not know my neighbours."

"I think, here in Suffolk, they must be chiefly the poor," said Mr. Hepworth.

"They were chiefly the poor who at first put their faith in our Saviour," said the priest.

"I think the analogy is hardly correctly drawn," said the bishop, with a curious smile. "We were speaking of those who are still attached to an old creed. Our Saviour was the teacher of a new religion. That the poor in the simplicity of their hearts should be the first to acknowledge the truth of a new religion is in accordance with our idea of human nature. But that an old faith should remain with the poor after it has been abandoned by the rich is not so easily intelligible."

"The Roman population still believed," said Carbury, "when the patricians had learned to regard their gods as simply useful bugbears."

"The patricians had not ostensibly abandoned their religion. The people clung to it thinking that their masters and rulers clung to it also."

"The poor have ever been the salt of the earth, my lord," said the priest.

"That begs the whole question," said the bishop, turning to his host, and beginning to talk about a breed of pigs which had lately been imported into the palace styes. Father Barham turned to Mr. Hepworth and went on with his argument, or rather began another. It was a mistake to suppose that the Catholics in the county were all poor. There were the A——s and the B——s, and the C——s and the D——s. He knew all their

names and was proud of their fidelity. To him these faithful ones were really the salt of the earth, who would some day be enabled by their fidelity to restore England to her pristine condition. The bishop had truly said that of many of his neighbours he did not know to what Church they belonged; but Father Barham, though he had not as yet been twelve months in the county, knew the name of nearly every Roman Catholic within its borders.

"Your priest is a very zealous man," said the bishop afterwards to Roger Carbury, "and I do not doubt but that he is an excellent gentleman; but he is perhaps a little indiscreet."

"I like him because he is doing the best he can according to his lights; without any reference to his own worldly welfare."

"That is all very grand, and I am perfectly willing to respect him. But I do not know that I should care to talk very freely in his company."

"I am sure he would repeat nothing."

"Perhaps not; but he would always be thinking that he was going to get the best of me."

"I don't think it answers," said Mrs. Yeld to her husband as they went home. "Of course I don't want to be prejudiced; but Protestants are Protestants, and Roman Catholics are Roman Catholics."

"You may say the same of Liberals and Conservatives, but you wouldn't have them decline to meet each other."

"It isn't quite the same, my dear. After all religion is religion."

"It ought to be," said the bishop.

"Of course I don't mean to put myself up against

you, my dear; but I don't know that I want to meet Mr. Barham again."

"I don't know that I do, either," said the bishop; "but if he comes in my way I hope I shall treat him civilly."

CHAPTER XVII.

Marie Melmotte hears a Love Tale.

On the following morning there came a telegram from Felix. He was to be expected at Beccles on that afternoon by a certain train; and Roger, at Lady Carbury's request, undertook to send a carriage to the station for him. This was done, but Felix did not arrive. There was still another train by which he might come so as to be just in time for dinner if dinner were postponed for half an hour. Lady Carbury with a tender look, almost without speaking a word, appealed to her cousin on behalf of her son. He knit his brows, as he always did, involuntarily, when displeased; but he assented. Then the carriage had to be sent again. Now carriages and carriage-horses were not numerous at Carbury. The squire kept a waggonnette and a pair of horses which, when not wanted for house use, were employed about the farm. He himself would walk home from the train, leaving the luggage to be brought by some cheap conveyance. He had already sent the carriage once on this day,—and now sent it again, Lady Carbury having said a word which showed that she hoped that this would be done. But he did it with deep displeasure. To the mother her son was Sir Felix, the baronet, entitled to special consideration because of his position and rank,—because also of his intention to

marry the great heiress of the day. To Roger Carbury Felix was a vicious young man, peculiarly antipathetic to himself, to whom no respect whatever was due. Nevertheless the dinner was put off, and the waggonnette was sent. But the waggonnette again came back empty. That evening was spent by Roger, Lady Carbury, and Henrietta, in very much gloom.

About four in the morning the house was roused by the coming of the baronet. Failing to leave town by either of the afternoon trains, he had contrived to catch the evening mail, and had found himself deposited at some distant town from which he had posted to Carbury. Roger came down in his dressing-gown to admit him, and Lady Carbury also left her room. Sir Felix evidently thought that he had been a very fine fellow in going through so much trouble. Roger held a very different opinion, and spoke little or nothing. "Oh, Felix," said the mother, "you have so terrified us!"

"I can tell you I was terrified myself when I found that I had to come fifteen miles across the country with a pair of old jades who could hardly get up a trot."

"But why didn't you come by the train you named?"

"I couldn't get out of the city," said the baronet with a ready lie.

"I suppose you were at the Board?" To this Felix made no direct answer. Roger knew that there had been no Board. Mr. Melmotte was in the country and there could be no Board, nor could Sir Felix have had business in the city. It was sheer impudence,—sheer indifference, and, into the bargain, a downright lie. The young man, who was of himself so unwelcome, who had come there on a project which he, Roger, utterly disapproved,—who had now knocked him and his household up at four o'clock in the morning,—had uttered

no word of apology. "Miserable cub!" Roger muttered between his teeth. Then he spoke aloud, "You had better not keep your mother standing here. I will show you your room."

"All right, old fellow," said Sir Felix. "I'm awfully sorry to disturb you all in this way. I think I'll just take a drop of brandy and soda before I go to bed, though." This was another blow to Roger.

"I doubt whether we have soda-water in the house, and if we have, I don't know where to get it. I can give you some brandy if you will come with me." He pronounced the word "brandy" in a tone which implied that it was a wicked, dissipated beverage. It was a wretched work to Roger. He was forced to go up-stairs and fetch a key in order that he might wait upon this cub,—this cur! He did it, however, and the cub drank his brandy-and-water, not in the least disturbed by his host's ill-humour. As he went to bed he suggested the probability of his not showing himself till lunch on the following day, and expressed a wish that he might have breakfast sent to him in bed. "He is born to be hung," said Roger to himself as he went to his room,—"and he'll deserve it."

On the following morning, being Sunday, they all went to church,—except Felix. Lady Carbury always went to church when she was in the country, never when she was at home in London. It was one of those moral habits, like early dinners and long walks, which suited country life. And she fancied that were she not to do so, the bishop would be sure to know it and would be displeased. She liked the bishop. She liked bishops generally; and was aware that it was a woman's duty to sacrifice herself for society. As to the purpose for which people go to church, it had probably never in

her life occurred to Lady Carbury to think of it. On their return they found Sir Felix smoking a cigar on the gravel path, close in front of the open drawing-room window.

"Felix," said his cousin, "take your cigar a little farther. You are filling the house with tobacco."

"Oh heavens,—what a prejudice!" said the baronet.

"Let it be so, but still do as I ask you." Sir Felix chucked the cigar out of his mouth on to the gravel walk, whereupon Roger walked up to the spot and kicked the offending weed away. This was the first greeting of the day between the two men.

After lunch Lady Carbury strolled about with her son, instigating him to go over at once to Caversham. "How the deuce am I to get there?"

"Your cousin will lend you a horse."

"He's as cross as a bear with a sore head. He's a deal older than I am, and a cousin and all that, but I'm not going to put up with insolence. If it were anywhere else I should just go into the yard and ask if I could have a horse and saddle as a matter of course."

"Roger has not a great establishment."

"I suppose he has a horse and saddle, and a man to get it ready. I don't want anything grand."

"He is vexed because he sent twice to the station for you yesterday."

"I hate the kind of fellow who is always thinking of little grievances. Such a man expects you to go like clockwork, and because you are not wound up just as he is, he insults you. I shall ask him for a horse as I would any one else, and if he does not like it, he may lump it." About half an hour after this he found his

cousin. "Can I have a horse to ride over to Caversham this afternoon?" he said.

"Our horses never go out on Sunday," said Roger. Then he added, after a pause, "You can have it. I'll give the order." Sir Felix would be gone on Tuesday, and it should be his own fault if that odious cousin ever found his way into Carbury House again! So he declared to himself as Felix rode out of the yard; but he soon remembered how probable it was that Felix himself would be the owner of Carbury. And should it ever come to pass,—as still was possible,—that Henrietta should be the mistress of Carbury, he could hardly forbid her to receive her brother. He stood for a while on the bridge watching his cousin as he cantered away upon the road, listening to the horse's feet. The young man was offensive in every possible way. Who does not know that ladies only are allowed to canter their friends' horses upon roads? A gentleman trots his horse, and his friend's horse. Roger Carbury had but one saddle horse,—a favourite old hunter that he loved as a friend. And now this dear old friend, whose legs probably were not quite so good as they once were, was being galloped along the hard road by that odious cub! "Soda and brandy!" Roger exclaimed to himself almost aloud, thinking of the discomfiture of that early morning. "He'll die some day of delirium tremens in a hospital!"

Before the Longestaffes left London to receive their new friends the Melmottes at Caversham, a treaty had been made between Mr. Longestaffe, the father, and Georgiana, the strong-minded daughter. The daughter on her side undertook that the guests should be treated with feminine courtesy. This might be called the most-favoured-nation clause. The Melmottes were to be treated exactly as though old Melmotte had been a

gentleman and Madame Melmotte a lady. In return for this the Longestaffe family were to be allowed to return to town. But here again the father had carried another clause. The prolonged sojourn in town was to be only for six weeks. On the 10th of July the Longestaffes were to be removed into the country for the remainder of the year. When the question of a foreign tour was proposed, the father became absolutely violent in his refusal. "In God's name where do you expect the money is to come from?" When Georgiana urged that other people had money to go abroad, her father told her that a time was coming in which she might think it lucky if she had a house over her head. This, however, she took as having been said with poetical licence, the same threat having been made more than once before. The treaty was very clear, and the parties to it were prepared to carry it out with fair honesty. The Melmottes were being treated with decent courtesy, and the house in town was not dismantled.

The idea, hardly ever in truth entertained but which had been barely suggested from one to another among the ladies of the family, that Dolly should marry Marie Melmotte, had been abandoned. Dolly, with all his vapid folly, had a will of his own, which, among his own family, was invincible. He was never persuaded to any course either by his father or mother. Dolly certainly would not marry Marie Melmotte. Therefore when the Longestaffes heard that Sir Felix was coming to the country, they had no special objection to entertaining him at Caversham. He had been lately talked of in London as the favourite in regard to Marie Melmotte. Georgiana Longestaffe had a grudge of her own against Lord Nidderdale, and was on that account somewhat well inclined towards Sir Felix's prospects. Soon

after the Melmottes' arrival she contrived to say a word to Marie respecting Sir Felix. "There is a friend of yours going to dine here on Monday, Miss Melmotte." Marie, who was at the moment still abashed by the grandeur and size and general fashionable haughtiness of her new acquaintances, made hardly any answer. "I think you know Sir Felix Carbury," continued Georgiana.

"Oh yes, we know Sir Felix Carbury."

"He is coming down to his cousin's. I suppose it is for your bright eyes, as Carbury Manor would hardly be just what he would like."

"I don't think he is coming because of me," said Marie blushing. She had once told him that he might go to her father, which according to her idea had been tantamount to accepting his offer as far as her power of acceptance went. Since that she had seen him, indeed, but he had not said a word to press his suit, nor, as far as she knew, had he said a word to Mr. Melmotte. But she had been very rigorous in declining the attentions of other suitors. She had made up her mind that she was in love with Felix Carbury, and she had resolved on constancy. But she had begun to tremble, fearing his faithlessness.

"We had heard," said Georgiana, "that he was a particular friend of yours." And she laughed aloud, with a vulgarity which Madame Melmotte certainly could not have surpassed.

Sir Felix, on the Sunday afternoon, found all the ladies out on the lawn, and he also found Mr. Melmotte there. At the last moment Lord Alfred Grendall had been asked,—not because he was at all in favour with any of the Longestaffes, but in order that he might be useful in disposing of the great Director. Lord Alfred

was used to him and could talk to him, and might probably know what he liked to eat and drink. Therefore Lord Alfred had been asked to Caversham, and Lord Alfred had come, having all his expenses paid by the great Director. When Sir Felix arrived, Lord Alfred was earning his entertainment by talking to Mr. Melmotte in a summer-house. He had cool drink before him and a box of cigars, but was probably thinking at the time how hard the world had been to him. Lady Pomona was languid, but not uncivil in her reception. She was doing her best to perform her part of the treaty in reference to Madame Melmotte. Sophia was walking apart with a certain Mr. Whitstable, a young squire in the neighbourhood, who had been asked to Caversham because as Sophia was now reputed to be twenty-eight, —they who decided the question might have said thirty-one without falsehood, — it was considered that Mr. Whitstable was good enough, or at least as good as could be expected. Sophia was handsome, but with a big, cold, unalluring handsomeness, and had not quite succeeded in London. Georgiana had been more admired, and boasted among her friends of the offers which she had rejected. Her friends on the other hand were apt to tell of her many failures. Nevertheless she held her head up, and had not as yet come down among the rural Whitstables. At the present moment her hands were empty, and she was devoting herself to such a performance of the treaty as should make it impossible for her father to leave his part of it unfulfilled.

For a few minutes Sir Felix sat on a garden chair making conversation to Lady Pomona and Madame Melmotte. "Beautiful garden," he said; "for myself I don't much care for gardens; but if one is to live in the country, this is the sort of thing that one would like."

"Delicious," said Madame Melmotte, repressing a yawn, and drawing her shawl higher round her throat. It was the end of May, and the weather was very warm for the time of the year; but, in her heart of hearts, Madame Melmotte did not like sitting out in the garden.

"It isn't a pretty place; but the house is comfortable, and we make the best of it," said Lady Pomona.

"Plenty of glass, I see," said Sir Felix. "If one is to live in the country, I like that kind of thing. Carbury is a very poor place."

There was offence in this;—as though the Carbury property and the Carbury position could be compared to the Longestaffe property and the Longestaffe position. Though dreadfully hampered for money, the Longestaffes were great people. "For a small place," said Lady Pomona, "I think Carbury is one of the nicest in the county. Of course it is not extensive."

"No, by Jove," said Sir Felix, "you may say that, Lady Pomona. It's like a prison to me with that moat round it." Then he jumped up and joined Marie Melmotte and Georgiana. Georgiana, glad to be released for a time from performance of the treaty, was not long before she left them together. She had understood that the two horses now in the running were Lord Nidderdale and Sir Felix; and though she would not probably have done much to aid Sir Felix, she was quite willing to destroy Lord Nidderdale.

Sir Felix had his work to do, and was willing to do it,—as far as such willingness could go with him. The prize was so great, and the comfort of wealth was so sure, that even he was tempted to exert himself. It was this feeling which had brought him into Suffolk, and induced him to travel all night, across dirty roads, in an

old cab. For the girl herself he cared not the least. It was not in his power really to care for anybody. He did not dislike her much. He was not given to disliking people strongly, except at the moments in which they offended him. He regarded her simply as the means by which a portion of Mr. Melmotte's wealth might be conveyed to his uses. In regard to feminine beauty he had his own ideas, and his own inclinations. He was by no means indifferent to such attraction. But Marie Melmotte, from that point of view, was nothing to him. Such prettiness as belonged to her came from the brightness of her youth, and from a modest shy demeanour joined to an incipient aspiration for the enjoyment of something in the world which should be her own. There was, too, arising within her bosom a struggle to be something in the world, an idea that she, too, could say something and have thoughts of her own, if only she had some friend near her whom she need not fear. Though still shy, she was always resolving that she would abandon her shyness, and already had thoughts of her own as to the perfectly open confidence which should exist between two lovers. When alone,—and she was much alone,—she would build castles in the air, which were bright with art and love, rather than with gems and gold. The books she read, poor though they generally were, left something bright on her imagination. She fancied to herself brilliant conversations in which she bore a bright part, though in real life she had hitherto hardly talked to any one since she was a child. Sir Felix Carbury, she knew, had made her an offer. She knew also, or thought that she knew, that she loved the man. And now she was with him alone! Now surely had come the time in which some one of her castles in the air might be found to be built of real materials.

"You know why I have come down here?" he said.

"To see your cousin."

"No, indeed. I'm not particularly fond of my cousin, who is a methodical stiff-necked old bachelor,—as cross as the mischief."

"How disagreeable!"

"Yes; he is disagreeable. I didn't come down to see him, I can tell you. But when I heard that you were going to be here with the Longestaffes, I determined to come at once. I wonder whether you are glad to see me?"

"I don't know," said Marie, who could not at once find that brilliancy of words with which her imagination supplied her readily enough in her solitude.

"Do you remember what you said to me that evening at my mother's?"

"Did I say anything? I don't remember anything particular."

"Do you not? Then I fear you can't think very much of me." He paused as though he supposed that she would drop into his mouth like a cherry. "I thought you told me that you would love me."

"Did I?"

"Did you not?"

"I don't know what I said. Perhaps if I said that, I didn't mean it."

"Am I to believe that?"

"Perhaps you didn't mean it, yourself."

"By George, I did. I was quite in earnest. There never was a fellow more in earnest than I was. I've come down here on purpose to say it again."

"To say what?"

"Whether you'll accept me?"

"I don't know whether you love me well enough."

She longed to be told by him that he loved her. He had no objection to tell her so, but, without thinking much about it, felt it to be a bore. All that kind of thing was trash and twaddle. He desired her to accept him; and he would have wished, were it possible, that she should have gone to her father for his consent. There was something in the big eyes and heavy jaws of Mr. Melmotte which he almost feared. "Do you really love me well enough?" she whispered.

"Of course I do. I'm bad at making pretty speeches, and all that, but you know I love you."

"Do you?"

"By George, yes. I always liked you from the first moment I saw you. I did indeed."

It was a poor declaration of love, but it sufficed. "Then I will love you," she said. "I will with all my heart."

"There's a darling!"

"Shall I be your darling? Indeed I will. I may call you Felix now;—mayn't I?"

"Rather."

"Oh, Felix, I hope you will love me. I will so dote upon you. You know a great many men have asked me to love them."

"I suppose so."

"But I have never, never cared for one of them in the least;—not in the least."

"You do care for me?"

"Oh yes." She looked up into his beautiful face as she spoke, and he saw that her eyes were swimming with tears. He thought at the moment that she was very common to look at. As regarded appearance only he would have preferred even Sophia Longestaffe. There was indeed a certain brightness of truth which another

man might have read in Marie's mingled smiles and tears, but it was thrown away altogether upon him. They were walking in some shrubbery quite apart from the house, where they were unseen; so, as in duty bound, he put his arm round her waist and kissed her. "Oh, Felix," she said, giving her face up to him; "no one ever did it before." He did not in the least believe her, nor was the matter one of the slightest importance to him. "Say that you will be good to me, Felix. I will be so good to you."

"Of course I will be good to you."

"Men are not always good to their wives. Papa is often very cross to mamma."

"I suppose he can be cross?"

"Yes, he can. He does not often scold me. I don't know what he'll say when we tell him about this."

"But I suppose he intends that you shall be married?"

"He wanted me to marry Lord Nidderdale and Lord Glasslough, but I hated them both. I think he wants me to marry Lord Nidderdale again now. He hasn't said so, but mamma tells me. But I never will;—never!"

"I hope not, Marie."

"You needn't be a bit afraid. I would not do it if they were to kill me. I hate him,—and I do so love you." Then she leaned with all her weight upon his arm and looked up again into his beautiful face. "You will speak to papa; won't you?"

"Will that be the best way?"

"I suppose so. How else?"

"I don't know whether Madame Melmotte ought not——"

"Oh dear no. Nothing would induce her. She is

more afraid of him than anybody;—more afraid of him than I am. I thought the gentleman always did that."

"Of course I'll do it," said Sir Felix. "I'm not afraid of him. Why should I? He and I are very good friends, you know."

"I'm glad of that."

"He made me a Director of one of his companies the other day."

"Did he? Perhaps he'll like you for a son-in-law."

"There's no knowing;—is there?"

"I hope he will. I shall like you for papa's son-in-law. I hope it isn't wrong to say that. Oh, Felix, say that you love me." Then she put her face up towards his again.

"Of course I love you," he said, not thinking it worth his while to kiss her. "It's no good speaking to him here. I suppose I had better go and see him in the city."

"He is in a good humour now," said Marie.

"But I couldn't get him alone. It wouldn't be the thing to do down here."

"Wouldn't it?"

"Not in the country,—in another person's house. Shall you tell Madame Melmotte?"

"Yes, I shall tell mamma; but she won't say anything to him. Mamma does not care much about me. But I'll tell you all that another time. Of course I shall tell you everything now. I never yet had anybody to tell anything to, but I shall never be tired of telling you." Then he left her as soon as he could, and escaped to the other ladies. Mr. Melmotte was still sitting in the summer-house, and Lord Alfred was still with him, smoking and drinking brandy and seltzer. As Sir Felix passed in front of the great man he told himself that it

was much better that the interview should be postponed till they were all in London. Mr. Melmotte did not look as though he were in a good humour. Sir Felix said a few words to Lady Pomona and Madame Melmotte. Yes; he hoped to have the pleasure of seeing them with his mother and sister on the following day. He was aware that his cousin was not coming. He believed that his cousin Roger never did go any where like any one else. No; he had not seen Mr. Longestaffe. He hoped to have the pleasure of seeing him to-morrow. Then he escaped, and got on his horse, and rode away.

"That's going to be the lucky man," said Georgiana to her mother, that evening.

"In what way lucky?"

"He is going to get the heiress and all the money. What a fool Dolly has been!"

"I don't think it would have suited Dolly," said Lady Pomona. "After all, why should not Dolly marry a lady?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ruby Ruggles hears a Love Tale.

Miss Ruby Ruggles, the granddaughter of old Daniel Ruggles, of Sheep's Acre, in the parish of Sheepstone, close to Bungay, received the following letter from the hands of the rural post letter-carrier on that Sunday morning;—"A friend will be somewhere near Sheepstone Birches between four and five o'clock on Sunday afternoon." There was not another word in the letter, but Miss Ruby Ruggles knew well from whom it came.

Daniel Ruggles was a farmer, who had the reputation of considerable wealth, but who was not very well looked on in the neighbourhood as being somewhat of a cur-

mudgeon and a miser. His wife was dead;—he had qua
relled with his only son, whose wife was also dead, and ha
banished him from his home;—his daughters were ma
ried and away; and the only member of his family wh
lived with him was his granddaughter Ruby. And th
granddaughter was a great trouble to the old man. Sh
was twenty-three years old, and had been engaged to
prosperous young man at Bungay in the meal and po
lard line, to whom old Ruggles had promised to giv
£500 on their marriage. But Ruby had taken it int
her foolish young head that she did not like meal an
pollard, and now she had received the above ver
dangerous letter. Though the writer had not dared t
sign his name she knew well that it came from Sir Feli
Carbury,—the most beautiful gentleman she had ever s
her eyes upon. Poor Ruby Ruggles! Living down
Sheep's Acre, on the Waveney, she had heard both to
much and too little of the great world beyond her ke
There were, she thought, many glorious things to be see
which she would never see were she in these her earl
years to become the wife of John Crumb, the dealer i
meal and pollard at Bungay. Therefore she was full
a wild joy, half joy half fear, when she got her lette
and, therefore, punctually at four o'clock on that Sunda
she was ensconced among the Sheepstone Birches,
that she might see without much danger of being see
Poor Ruby Ruggles, who was left to be so much mistre
of herself at the time of her life in which she most r
quired the kindness of a controlling hand!

Mr. Ruggles held his land, or the greater part of i
on what is called a bishop's lease, Sheep's Acre Far
being a part of the property which did belong to th
bishopric of Elmham, and which was still set apart fo
its sustentation;—but he also held a small extent of ou

lying meadow which belonged to the Carbury estate, so that he was one of the tenants of Roger Carbury. Those Sheepstone Birches, at which Felix made his appointment, belonged to Roger. On a former occasion, when the feeling between the two cousins was kinder than that which now existed, Felix had ridden over with the landlord to call on the old man, and had then first seen Ruby;—and had heard from Roger something of Ruby's history up to that date. It had then been just made known that she was to marry John Crumb. Since that time not a word had been spoken between the men respecting the girl. Mr. Carbury had heard, with sorrow, that the marriage was either postponed or abandoned,—but his growing dislike to the baronet had made it very improbable that there should be any conversation between them on the subject. Sir Felix, however, had probably heard more of Ruby Ruggles than her grandfather's landlord.

There is, perhaps, no condition of mind more difficult for the ordinarily well-instructed inhabitant of a city to realise than that of such a girl as Ruby Ruggles. The rural day labourer and his wife live on a level surface which is comparatively open to the eye. Their aspiration, whether for good or evil,—whether for food and drink to be honestly earned for themselves and children, or for drink first, to be come by either honestly or dishonestly,—are, if looked at at all, fairly visible. And with the men of the Ruggles class one can generally find out what they would be at, and in what direction their minds are at work. But the Ruggles woman,—especially the Ruggles young woman,—is better educated, has higher aspirations and a brighter imagination, and is infinitely more cunning than the man. If she be good-looking and relieved from the pressure of want, her

thoughts soar into a world which is as unknown to her as heaven is to us, and in regard to which her longings are apt to be infinitely stronger than are ours for heaven. Her education has been much better than that of the man. She can read, whereas he can only spell words from a book. She can write a letter after her fashion, whereas he can barely spell words out on a paper. Her tongue is more glib, and her intellect sharper. But her ignorance as to the reality of things is much more gross than his. By such contact as he has with men in markets, in the streets of the towns he frequents, and even in the fields, he learns something unconsciously of the relative condition of his countrymen,—and, as to that which he does not learn, his imagination is obtuse. But the woman builds castles in the air, and wonders, and longs. To the young farmer the squire's daughter is a superior being very much out of his way. To the farmer's daughter the young squire is an Apollo, whom to look at is a pleasure,—by whom to be looked at is a delight. The danger for the most part is soon over. The girl marries after her kind, and then husband and children put the matter at rest for ever.

A mind more absolutely uninstructed than that of Ruby Ruggles as to the world beyond Suffolk and Norfolk it would be impossible to find. But her thoughts were as wide as they were vague, and as active as they were erroneous. Why should she with all her prettiness, and all her cleverness,—with all her fortune to boot,—marry that dustiest of all men, John Crumb, before she had seen something of the beauties of the things of which she had read in the books which came in her way? John Crumb was not bad-looking. He was a sturdy, honest fellow, too,—slow of speech but sure of his points when he had got them within his grip,—fond of his beer but

not often drunk, and the very soul of industry at his work. But though she had known him all her life she had never known him otherwise than dusty. The meal had so gotten within his hair, and skin, and raiment, that it never came out altogether even on Sundays. His normal complexion was a healthy pallor, through which indeed some records of hidden ruddiness would make themselves visible, but which was so judiciously assimilated to his hat and coat and waistcoat, that he was more like a stout ghost than a healthy young man. Nevertheless it was said of him that he could thrash any man in Bungay, and carry two hundred weight of flour upon his back. And Ruby also knew this of him,—that he worshipped the very ground on which she trod.

But, alas, she thought there might be something better than such worship; and, therefore, when Felix Carbury came in her way, with his beautiful oval face, and his rich brown colour, and his bright hair and lovely moustache, she was lost in a feeling which she mistook for love; and when he sneaked over to her a second and a third time, she thought more of his listless praise than ever she had thought of John Crumb's honest promises. But, though she was an utter fool, she was not a fool without a principle. She was miserably ignorant; but she did understand that there was a degradation which it behoved her to avoid. She thought, as the moths seem to think, that she might fly into the flame and not burn her wings. After her fashion she was pretty, with long glossy ringlets, which those about the farm on week days would see confined in curl-papers, and large round dark eyes, and a clear dark complexion, in which the blood showed itself plainly beneath the soft brown skin. She was strong, and healthy, and tall,—

and had a will of her own which gave infinite trouble t old Daniel Ruggles, her grandfather.

Felix Carbury took himself two miles out of his wa in order that he might return by Sheepstone Birche which was a little copse distant not above half a mi from Sheep's Acre farmhouse. A narrow angle of th little wood came up to the road, by which there was gate leading into a grass meadow, which Sir Felix ha remembered when he made his appointment. The roa was no more than a country lane, unfrequented at a times, and almost sure to be deserted on Sundays. H approached the gate in a walk, and then stood awhi looking into the wood. He had not stood long befo he saw the girl's bonnet beneath a tree standing ju outside the wood, in the meadow, but on the bank the ditch. Thinking for a moment what he would d about his horse, he rode him into the field, and the dismounting, fastened him to a rail which ran down th side of the copse. Then he sauntered on till he stoo looking down upon Ruby Ruggles as she sat beneat the tree. "I like your impudence," she said, "in callin yourself a friend."

"Ain't I a friend, Ruby?"

"A pretty sort of friend, you! When you was goin away, you was to be back at Carbury in a fortnigh and that is,—oh, ever so long ago now."

"But I wrote to you, Ruby."

"What's letters? And the postman to know all as in 'em for anything anybody knows, and grandfather t be almost sure to see 'em. I don't call letters no goo at all, and I beg you won't write 'em any more."

"Did he see them?"

"No thanks to you if he didn't. I don't know wh

you are come here, Sir Felix,—nor yet I don't know why I should come and meet you. It's all just folly like."

"Because I love you;—that's why I come; eh, Ruby? And you have come because you love me; eh, Ruby? Is not that about it?" Then he threw himself on the ground beside her, and got his arm round her waist.

It would boot little to tell here all that they said to each other. The happiness of Ruby Ruggles for that half hour was no doubt complete. She had her London lover beside her; and though in every word he spoke there was a tone of contempt, still he talked of love, and made her promises, and told her that she was pretty. He probably did not enjoy it much; he cared very little about her, and carried on the liaison simply because it was the proper sort of thing for a young man to do. He had begun to think that the odour of patchouli was unpleasant, and that the flies were troublesome, and the ground hard, before the half hour was over. She felt that she could be content to sit there for ever and to listen to him. This was the realisation of those delights of life of which she had read in the thrice-thumbed old novels which she had gotten from the little circulating library at Bungay.

But what was to come next? She had not dared to ask him to marry her,—had not dared to say those very words; and he had not dared to ask her to be his mistress. There was an animal courage about her, and an amount of strength also, and a fire in her eye, of which he had learned to be aware. Before the half hour was over I think that he wished himself away;—but when he did go, he made a promise to see her again on the Tuesday morning. Her grandfather would be at Harlestone market, and she would meet him at about noon at the bottom of the kitchen garden belonging to the farm.

As he made the promise he resolved that he would not keep it. He would write to her again, and bid her come to him in London, and would send her money for the journey.

"I suppose I am to be his wedded wife," said Ruby to herself, as she crept away down from the road, away also from her own home;—so that on her return her presence should not be associated with that of the young man, should any one chance to see the young man on the road. "I'll never be nothing unless I'm that," she said to herself. Then she allowed her mind to lose itself in expatiating on the difference between John Crumb and Sir Felix Carbury.

CHAPTER XIX.

Hetta Carbury hears a Love Tale.

"I HAVE half a mind to go back to-morrow morning," Felix said to his mother that Sunday evening after dinner. At that moment Roger was walking round the garden by himself, and Henrietta was in her own room.

"To-morrow morning, Felix! You are engaged to dine with the Longestaffes!"

"You could make any excuse you like about that."

"It would be the most uncourteous thing in the world. The Longestaffes you know are the leading people in this part of the country. No one knows what may happen. If you should ever be living at Carbury, how sad it would be that you should have quarrelled with them."

"You forget, mother, that Dolly Longestaffe is about the most intimate friend I have in the world."

"That does not justify you in being uncivil to the

father and mother. And you should remember what you came here for."

"What did I come for?"

"That you might see Marie Melmotte more at your ease than you can in their London house."

"That's all settled," said Sir Felix, in the most indifferent tone that he could assume.

"Settled!"

"As far as the girl is concerned. I can't very well go to the old fellow for his consent down here."

"Do you mean to say, Felix, that Marie Melmotte has accepted you?"

"I told you that before."

"My dear Felix. Oh, my boy!" In her joy the mother took her unwilling son in her arms and caressed him. Here was the first step taken not only to success, but to such magnificent splendour as should make her son to be envied by all young men, and herself to be envied by all mothers in England! "No, you didn't tell me before. But I am so happy. Is she really fond of you? I don't wonder that any girl should be fond of you."

"I can't say anything about that, but I think she means to stick to it."

"If she is firm, of course her father will give way at last. Fathers always do give way when the girl is firm. Why should he oppose it?"

"I don't know that he will."

"You are a man of rank, with a title of your own. I suppose what he wants is a gentleman for his girl. I don't see why he should not be perfectly satisfied. With all his enormous wealth a thousand a year or so can't make any difference. And then he made you one of the

Directors at his Board. Oh Felix;—it is almost too good to be true."

"I ain't quite sure that I care very much about being married, you know."

"Oh, Felix, pray don't say that. Why shouldn't you like being married? She is a very nice girl, and we shall all be so fond of her! Don't let any feeling of that kind come over you; pray don't. You will be able to do just what you please when once the question of her money is settled. Of course you can hunt as often as you like, and you can have a house in any part of London you please. You must understand by this time how very disagreeable it is to have to get on without an established income."

"I quite understand that."

"If this were once done you would never have any more trouble of that kind. There would be plenty of money for everything as long as you live. It would be complete success. I don't know how to say enough to you, or to tell you how dearly I love you, or to make you understand how well I think you have done it all." Then she caressed him again, and was almost beside herself in an agony of mingled anxiety and joy. If, after all, her beautiful boy, who had lately been her disgrace and her great trouble because of his poverty, should shine forth to the world as a baronet with £20,000 a year, how glorious would it be! She must have known, —she did know,—how poor, how selfish a creature he was. But her gratification at the prospect of his splendour obliterated the sorrow with which the vileness of his character sometimes oppressed her. Were he to win this girl with all her father's money, neither she nor his sister would be the better for it, except in this, that the burden of maintaining him would be taken from her shoulders.

But his magnificence would be established. He was her son, and the prospect of his fortune and splendour was sufficient to elate her into a very heaven of beautiful dreams. "But, Felix," she continued, "you really must stay and go to the Longestaffes' to-morrow. It will only be one day.—And now were you to run away——"

"Run away! What nonsense you talk."

"If you were to start back to London at once I mean, it would be an affront to her, and the very thing to set Melmotte against you. You should lay yourself out to please him;—indeed you should."

"Oh, bother!" said Sir Felix. But nevertheless he allowed himself to be persuaded to remain. The matter was important even to him, and he consented to endure the almost unendurable nuisance of spending another day at the Manor House. Lady Carbury, almost lost in delight, did not know where to turn for sympathy. If her cousin were not so stiff, so pig-headed, so wonderfully ignorant of the affairs of the world, he would have at any rate consented to rejoice with her. Though he might not like Felix,—who, as his mother admitted to herself, had been rude to her cousin,—he would have rejoiced for the sake of the family. But, as it was, she did not dare to tell him. He would have received her tidings with silent scorn. And even Henrietta would not be enthusiastic. She felt that though she would have delighted to expatiate on this great triumph, she must be silent at present. It should now be her great effort to ingratiate herself with Mr. Melmotte at the dinner party at Caversham.

During the whole of that evening Roger Carbury hardly spoke to his cousin Hetta. There was not much conversation between them till quite late, when Father Barham came in for supper. He had been over at Bun-

gay among his people there, and had walked back, taking Carbury on the way. "What did you think of our bishop?" Roger asked him, rather imprudently.

"Not much of him as bishop. I don't doubt that he makes a very nice lord, and that he does more good among his neighbours than an average lord. But you don't put power or responsibility into the hands of any one sufficient to make him a bishop."

"Nine-tenths of the clergy in the diocese would be guided by him in any matter of clerical conduct which might come before him."

"Because they know that he has no strong opinion of his own, and would not therefore desire to dominate theirs. Take any of your bishops that has an opinion,—if there be one left,—and see how far your clergy consent to his teaching!" Roger turned round and took up his book. He was already becoming tired of his pet priest. He himself always abstained from saying a word derogatory to his new friend's religion in the man's hearing; but his new friend did not by any means return the compliment. Perhaps also Roger felt that were he to take up the cudgels for an argument he might be worsted in the combat, as in such combats success is won by practised skill rather than by truth. Henrietta was also reading, and Felix was smoking elsewhere,—wondering whether the hours would ever wear themselves away in that castle of dulness, in which no cards were to be seen, and where, except at meal-times, there was nothing to drink. But Lady Carbury was quite willing to allow the priest to teach her that all appliances for the dissemination of religion outside his own church must be naught.

"I suppose our bishops are sincere in their beliefs," she said with her sweetest smile.

"I'm sure I hope so. I have no possible reason to doubt it as to the two or three whom I have seen,—nor indeed as to all the rest whom I have not seen."

"They are so much respected everywhere as good and pious men!"

"I do not doubt it. Nothing tends so much to respect as a good income. But they may be excellent men without being excellent bishops. I find no fault with them, but much with the system by which they are controlled. Is it probable that a man should be fitted to select guides for other men's souls because he has succeeded by infinite labour in his vocation in becoming the leader of a majority in the House of Commons?"

"Indeed, no," said Lady Carbury, who did not in the least understand the nature of the question put to her.

"And when you've got your bishop, is it likely that a man should be able to do his duty in that capacity who has no power of his own to decide whether a clergyman under him is or is not fit for his duty?"

"Hardly, indeed."

"The English people, or some of them,—that some being the richest, and, at present, the most powerful,—like to play at having a Church, though there is not sufficient faith in them to submit to the control of a Church."

"Do you think men should be controlled by clergymen, Mr. Barham?"

"In matters of faith I do; and so, I suppose, do you; at least you make that profession. You declare it to be your duty to submit yourself to your spiritual pastors and masters."

"That, I thought, was for children," said Lady Carbury. "The clergyman, in the catechism, says, 'My good child.'"

"It is what you were taught as a child before you had made profession of your faith to a bishop, in order that you might know your duty when you had ceased to be a child. I quite agree, however, that the matter, as viewed by your Church, is childish altogether, and intended only for children. As a rule, adults with you want no religion."

"I am afraid that is true of a great many."

"It is marvellous to me that, when a man thinks of it, he should not be driven by very fear to the comforts of a safer faith,—unless, indeed, he enjoy the security of absolute infidelity."

"That is worse than anything," said Lady Carbury with a sigh and a shudder.

"I don't know that it is worse than a belief which is no belief," said the priest with energy;—"than a creed which sits so easily on a man that he does not even know what it contains, and never asks himself as he repeats it, whether it be to him credible or incredible."

"That is very bad," said Lady Carbury.

"We're getting too deep, I think," said Roger, putting down the book which he had in vain been trying to read.

"I think it is so pleasant to have a little serious conversation on Sunday evening," said Lady Carbury. The priest drew himself back into his chair and smiled. He was quite clever enough to understand that Lady Carbury had been talking nonsense, and clever enough also to be aware of the cause of Roger's uneasiness. But Lady Carbury might be all the easier converted because she understood nothing and was fond of ambitious talking; and Roger Carbury might possibly be forced into conviction by the very feeling which at present made him unwilling to hear arguments.

"I don't like hearing my Church ill-spoken of," said Roger.

"You wouldn't like me if I thought ill of it and spoke well of it," said the priest.

"And, therefore, the less said the sooner mended," said Roger, rising from his chair. Upon this Father Barham took his departure and walked away to Beccles. It might be that he had sowed some seed. It might be that he had, at any rate, ploughed some ground. Even the attempt to plough the ground was a good work which would not be forgotten.

The following morning was the time on which Roger had fixed for repeating his suit to Henrietta. He had determined that it should be so, and though the words had been almost on his tongue during that Sunday afternoon, he had repressed them because he would do as he had determined. He was conscious, almost painfully conscious, of a certain increase of tenderness in his cousin's manner towards him. All that pride of independence, which had amounted almost to roughness, when she was in London, seemed to have left her. When he greeted her morning and night, she looked softly into his face. She cherished the flowers which he gave her. He could perceive that if he expressed the slightest wish in any matter about the house she would attend to it. There had been a word said about punctuality, and she had become punctual as the hand of the clock. There was not a glance of her eye, nor a turn of her hand, that he did not watch, and calculate its effect as regarded himself. But because she was tender to him and observant, he did not by any means allow himself to believe that her heart was growing into love for him. He thought that he understood the working of her mind. She could see how great was his disgust

at her brother's doings; how fretted he was by her mother's conduct. Her grace, and sweetness, and sense, took part with him against those who were nearer to herself, and therefore,—in pity,—she was kind to him. It was thus he read it, and he read it almost with exact accuracy.

"Hetta," he said after breakfast, "come out into the garden awhile."

"Are not you going to the men?"

"Not yet, at any rate. I do not always go to the men as you call it." She put on her hat and tripped out with him, knowing well that she had been summoned to hear the old story. She had been sure, as soon as she found the white rose in her room, that the old story would be repeated again before she left Carbury;—and, up to this time, she had hardly made up her mind what answer she would give to it. That she could not take his offer, she thought she did know. She knew well that she loved the other man. That other man had never asked her for her love, but she thought that she knew that he desired it. But in spite of all this there had in truth grown up in her bosom a feeling of tenderness towards her cousin so strong that it almost tempted her to declare to herself that he ought to have what he wanted, simply because he wanted it. He was so good, so noble, so generous, so devoted, that it almost seemed to her that she could not be justified in refusing him. And she had gone entirely over to his side in regard to the Melmottes. Her mother had talked to her of the charm of Mr. Melmotte's money, till her very heart had been sickened. There was nothing noble there; but, as contrasted with that, Roger's conduct and bearing were those of a fine gentleman who knew neither fear nor shame. Should such a one be doomed to pine for ever

because a girl could not love him,—a man born to be loved, if nobility and tenderness and truth were lovely!

"Hetta," he said, "put your arm here." She gave him her arm. "I was a little annoyed last night by that priest. I want to be civil to him, and now he is always turning against me."

"He doesn't do any harm, I suppose?"

"He does do harm if he teaches you and me to think lightly of those things which we have been brought up to revere." So, thought Henrietta, it isn't about love this time; it's only about the Church. "He ought not to say things before my guests as to our way of believing, which I wouldn't under any circumstances say as to his. I didn't quite like your hearing it."

"I don't think he'll do me any harm. I'm not at all that way given. I suppose they all do it. It's their business."

"Poor fellow! I brought him here just because I thought it was a pity that a man born and bred like a gentleman should never see the inside of a comfortable house."

"I liked him;—only I didn't like his saying stupid things about the bishop."

"And I like him." Then there was a pause. "I suppose your brother does not talk to you much about his own affairs."

"His own affairs, Roger? Do you mean money? He never says a word to me about money."

"I meant about the Melmottes."

"No; not to me. Felix hardly ever speaks to me about anything."

"I wonder whether she has accepted him."

"I think she very nearly did accept him in London."

"I can't quite sympathise with your mother in all her

feelings about this marriage, because I do not think that I recognise as she does the necessity of money."

"Felix is so disposed to be extravagant."

"Well; yes. But I was going to say that though I cannot bring myself to say anything to encourage her about this heiress, I quite recognise her unselfish devotion to his interests."

"Mamma thinks more of him than of anything," said Hetta, not in the least intending to accuse her mother of indifference to herself.

"I know it; and though I happen to think myself that her other child would better repay her devotion,"—this he said, looking up to Hetta and smiling,—"I quite feel how good a mother she is to Felix. You know, when she first came the other day we almost had a quarrel."

"I felt that there was something unpleasant."

"And then Felix coming after his time put me out. I am getting old and cross, or I should not mind such things."

"I think you are so good,—and so kind." As she said this she leaned upon his arm almost as though she meant to tell him that she loved him.

"I have been angry with myself," he said, "and so I am making you my father confessor. Open confession is good for the soul sometimes, and I think that you would understand me better than your mother."

"I do understand you; but don't think there is any fault to confess."

"You will not exact any penance?" She only looked at him and smiled. "I am going to put a penance on myself all the same. I can't congratulate your brother on his wooing over at Caversham, as I know nothing

about it, but I will express some civil wish to him about things in general."

"Will that be a penance?"

"If you could look into my mind you'd find that it would. I'm full of fretful anger against him for half-a-dozen little frivolous things. Didn't he throw his cigar on the path? Didn't he lie in bed on Sunday instead of going to church?"

"But then he was travelling all the Saturday night."

"Whose fault was that? But don't you see it is the triviality of the offence which makes the penance necessary. Had he knocked me over the head with a pickaxe, or burned the house down, I should have had a right to be angry. But I was angry because he wanted a horse on Sunday; and therefore I must do penance."

There was nothing of love in all this. Hetta, however, did not wish him to talk of love. He was certainly now treating her as a friend,—as a most intimate friend. If he would only do that without making love to her, how happy could she be! But his determination still held good. "And now," said he, altering his tone altogether, "I must speak about myself." Immediately the weight of her hand upon his arm was lessened. Thereupon he put his left hand round and pressed her arm to his. "No," he said; "do not make any change towards me while I speak to you. Whatever comes of it we shall at any rate be cousins and friends."

"Always friends!" she said.

"Yes;—always friends. And now listen to me for I have much to say. I will not tell you again that I love you. You know it, or else you must think me the vainest and falsest of men. It is not only that I love you, but I am so accustomed to concern myself with one thing only, so constrained by the habits and nature

of my life to confine myself to single interests, that I cannot as it were escape from my love. I am thinking of it always, often despising myself because I think of it so much. For, after all, let a woman be ever so good, —and you to me are all that is good,—a man should not allow his love to dominate his intellect."

"Oh, no!"

"I do. I calculate my chances within my own bosom almost as a man might calculate his chances of heaven. I should like you to know me just as I am, the weak and the strong together. I would not win you by a lie if I could. I think of you more than I ought to do. I am sure,—quite sure that you are the only possible mistress of this house during my tenure of it. If I am ever to live as other men do, and to care about the things which other men care for, it must be as your husband."

"Pray,—pray do not say that."

"Yes; I think that I have a right to say it,—and a right to expect that you should believe me. I will not ask you to be my wife if you do not love me. Not that I should fear ought for myself, but that you should not be pressed to make a sacrifice of yourself because I am your friend and cousin. But I think it is quite possible you might come to love me,—unless your heart be absolutely given away elsewhere."

"What am I to say?"

"We each of us know of what the other is thinking. If Paul Montague has robbed me of my love——?"

"Mr. Montague has never said a word."

"If he had, I think he would have wronged me. He met you in my house, and I think must have known what my feelings were towards you."

"But he never has."

"We have been like brothers together,—one brother being very much older than the other, indeed; or like father and son. I think he should place his hopes elsewhere."

"What am I to say? If he have such hope he has not told me. I think it almost cruel that a girl should be asked in that way."

"Hetta, I should not wish to be cruel to you. Of course I know the way of the world in such matters. I have no right to ask you about Paul Montague,—no right to expect an answer. But it is all the world to me. You can understand that I should think you might learn to love even me, if you loved no one else." The tone of his voice was manly, and at the same time full of entreaty. His eyes as he looked at her were bright with love and anxiety. She not only believed him as to the tale which he now told her; but she believed in him altogether. She knew that he was a staff on which a woman might safely lean, trusting to it for comfort and protection in life. In that moment she all but yielded to him. Had he seized her in his arms and kissed her then, I think she would have yielded. She did all but love him. She so regarded him that had it been some other woman that he craved, she would have used every art she knew to have backed his suit, and would have been ready to swear that any woman was a fool who refused him. She almost hated herself because she was unkind to one who so thoroughly deserved kindness. As it was she made him no answer, but continued to walk beside him trembling. "I thought I would tell it you all, because I wish you to know exactly the state of my mind. I would show you if I could all my heart and all my thoughts about yourself as in a glass case. Do not coy your love for me if you can feel it. When you

know, dear, that a man's heart is set upon a woman mine is set on you, so that it is for you to make h life bright or dark, for you to open or to shut the gat of his earthly Paradise, I think you will be above kee ing him in darkness for the sake of a girlish scruple."

"Oh, Roger!"

"If ever there should come a time in which you c say it truly, remember my truth to you and say it boldl I at least shall never change. Of course if you lo another man and give yourself to him, it will be all ov Tell me that boldly also. I have said it all now. G bless you, my own heart's darling. I hope,—I hope may be strong enough through it all to think more your happiness than of my own." Then he parted fro her abruptly, taking his way over one of the bridg and leaving her to find her way into the house alone.

CHAPTER XX.

Lady Pomona's Dinner Party.

Roger Carbury's half formed plan of keeping He rietta at home while Lady Carbury and Sir Felix we to dine at Caversham fell to the ground. It was to l carried out only in the event of Hetta's yielding to h prayer. But he had in fact not made a prayer, and Het had certainly yielded nothing. When the evening cam Lady Carbury started with her son and daughter, ar Roger was left alone. In the ordinary course of his li he was used to solitude. During the greater part of t year he would eat and drink and live without cor panionship; so that there was to him nothing peculiar sad in this desertion. But on the present occasion h could not prevent himself from dwelling on the loneline

of his lot in life. These cousins of his who were his guests cared nothing for him. Lady Carbury had come to his house simply that it might be useful to her; Sir Felix did not pretend to treat him with even ordinary courtesy; and Hetta herself, though she was soft to him and gracious, was soft and gracious through pity rather than love. On this day he had, in truth, asked her for nothing: but he had almost brought himself to think that she might give all that he wanted without asking. And yet, when he told her of the greatness of his love, and of its endurance, she was simply silent. When the carriage taking them to dinner went away down the road, he sat on the parapet of the bridge in front of the house listening to the sound of the horses' feet, and telling himself that there was nothing left for him in life.

If ever one man had been good to another, he had been good to Paul Montague, and now Paul Montague was robbing him of everything he valued in the world. His thoughts were not logical, nor was his mind exact. The more he considered it, the stronger was his inward condemnation of his friend. He had never mentioned to anyone the services he had rendered to Montague. In speaking of him to Hetta he had alluded only to the affection which had existed between them. But he felt that because of those services his friend Montague had owed it to him not to fall in love with the girl he loved; and he thought that if, unfortunately, this had happened unawares, Montague should have retired as soon as he learned the truth. He could not bring himself to forgive his friend, even though Hetta had assured him that his friend had never spoken to her of love. He was sore all over, and it was Paul Montague who made him sore. Had there been no such man at Carbury when Hetta came there, Hetta might now have been mistress of the

house. He sat there till the servant came to tell him that his dinner was on the table, Then he crept in and ate,—so that the man might not see his sorrow; and, after dinner, he sat with a book in his hand seeming to read. But he read not a word, for his mind was fixed altogether on his cousin Hetta. "What a poor creature a man is," he said to himself, "who is not sufficiently his own master to get over a feeling like this."

At Caversham there was a very grand party,—as grand almost as a dinner party can be in the country. There were the Earl and Countess of Loddon and Lady Jane Pewet from Loddon Park, and the bishop and his wife, and the Hepworths. These, with the Carburys and the parson's family, and the people staying in the house, made twenty-four at the dinner table. As there were fourteen ladies and only ten men, the banquet can hardly be said to have been very well arranged. But those things cannot be done in the country with the exactness which the appliances of London make easy; and then the Longestaffes, though they were decidedly people of fashion, were not famous for their excellence in arranging such matters. If aught, however, was lacking in exactness, it was made up in grandeur. There were three powdered footmen, and in that part of the country Lady Pomona alone was served after this fashion; and there was a very heavy butler, whose appearance of itself was sufficient to give éclat to a family. The grand saloon in which nobody ever lived was thrown open, and sofas and chairs on which nobody ever sat were uncovered. It was not above once in the year that this kind of thing was done at Caversham; but when it was done, nothing was spared which could contribute to the magnificence of the fête. Lady Pomona and her two tall daughters standing up to receive the little Countess of Loddon

and Lady Jane Pewet, who was the image of her mother on a somewhat smaller scale, while Madame Melmotte and Marie stood behind as though ashamed of themselves, was a sight to see. Then the Carburys came, and then Mrs. Yeld with the bishop. The grand room was soon fairly full; but nobody had a word to say. The bishop was generally a man of much conversation, and Lady Loddon, if she were well pleased with her listeners, could talk by the hour without ceasing. But on this occasion nobody could utter a word. Lord Loddon pottered about, making a feeble attempt, in which he was seconded by no one. Lord Alfred stood, stock-still, stroking his grey moustache with his hand. That much greater man, Augustus Melmotte, put his thumbs into the arm-holes of his waistcoat, and was impassible. The bishop saw at a glance the hopelessness of the occasion, and made no attempt. The master of the house shook hands with each guest as he entered, and then devoted his mind to expectation of the next comer. Lady Pomona and her two daughters were grand and handsome, but weary and dumb. In accordance with the treaty, Madame Melmotte had been entertained civilly for four entire days. It could not be expected that the ladies of Caversham should come forth unwearied after such a struggle.

When dinner was announced Felix was allowed to take in Marie Melmotte. There can be no doubt but that the Caversham ladies did execute their part of the treaty. They were led to suppose that this arrangement would be desirable to the Melmottes, and they made it. The great Augustus himself went in with Lady Carbury, much to her satisfaction. She also had been dumb in the drawing-room; but now, if ever, it would be her duty to exert herself. "I hope you like Suffolk," she said.

"Pretty well, I thank you. Oh, yes;—very nice place for a little fresh air."

"Yes;—that's just it, Mr. Melmotte. When the summer comes one does long so to see the flowers."

"We have better flowers in our balconies than any I see down here," said Mr. Melmotte.

"No doubt;—because you can command the floral tribute of the world at large. What is there that money will not do? It can turn a London street into a bower of roses, and give you grottoes in Grosvenor Square."

"It's a very nice place, is London."

"If you have got plenty of money, Mr. Melmotte."

"And if you have not, it's the best place I know to get it. Do you live in London, ma'am?" He had quite forgotten Lady Carbury even if he had seen her at his house, and with the dulness of hearing common to men, had not picked up her name when told to take her out to dinner.

"Oh, yes, I live in London. I have had the honour of being entertained by you there." This she said with her sweetest smile.

"Oh, indeed. So many do come, that I don't always just remember."

"How should you,—with all the world flocking round you? I am Lady Carbury, the mother of Sir Felix Carbury, whom I think you will remember."

"Yes; I know Sir Felix. He's sitting there, next to my daughter."

"Happy fellow!"

"I don't know much about that. Young men don't get their happiness in that way now. They've got other things to think of."

"He thinks so much of his business."

"Oh! I didn't know," said Mr. Melmotte.

"He sits at the same Board with you, I think, Mr. Melmotte."

"Oh;—that's his business!" said Mr. Melmotte, with a grim smile.

Lady Carbury was very clever as to many things, and was not ill-informed on matters in general that were going on around her; but she did not know much about the city, and was profoundly ignorant as to the duties of those Directors of whom, from time to time, she saw the names in a catalogue. "I trust that he is diligent, there," she said; "and that he is aware of the great privilege which he enjoys in having the advantage of your council and guidance."

"He don't trouble me much, ma'am, and I don't trouble him much." After this Lady Carbury said no more as to her son's position in the city. She endeavoured to open various other subjects of conversation; but she found Mr. Melmotte to be heavy on her hands. After a while she had to abandon him in despair, and give herself up to raptures in favour of Protestantism at the bidding of the Caversham parson, who sat on the other side of her, and who had been worked to enthusiasm by some mention of Father Barham's name.

Opposite to her, or nearly so, sat Sir Felix and his love. "I have told mamma," Marie had whispered, as she walked in to dinner with him. She was now full of the idea so common to girls who are engaged,—and as natural as it is common,—that she might tell everything to her lover.

"Did she say anything?" he asked. Then Marie had to take her place and arrange her dress before she could reply to him. "As to her, I suppose it does not matter what she says, does it?"

"She said a great deal. She thinks that papa will

think you are not rich enough. Hush! Talk about something else, or people will hear." So much she had been able to say during the bustle.

Felix was not at all anxious to talk about his love, and changed the subject very willingly. "Have you been riding?" he asked.

"No; I don't think there are horses here,—not for visitors, that is. How did you get home? Did you have any adventures?"

"None at all," said Felix, remembering Ruby Ruggles. "I just rode home quietly. I go to town to-morrow."

"And we go on Wednesday. Mind you come and see us before long." This she said bringing her voice down to a whisper.

"Of course I shall. I suppose I'd better go to your father in the city. Does he go every day?"

"Oh yes, every day. He's back always about seven. Sometimes he's good-natured enough when he comes back, but sometimes he's very cross. He's best just after dinner. But it's so hard to get to him then. Lord Alfred is almost always there; and then other people come, and they play cards. I think the city will be best."

"You'll stick to it?" he asked.

"Oh, yes;—indeed I will. Now that I've once said it nothing will ever turn me. I think papa knows that." Felix looked at her as she said this, and thought that he saw more in her countenance than he had ever read there before. Perhaps she would consent to run away with him; and, if so, being the only child, she would certainly,—almost certainly,—be forgiven. But if he were to run away with her and marry her, and then find that she were not forgiven, and that Melmotte allowed

her to starve without a shilling of fortune, where would he be then? Looking at the matter in all its bearings, considering among other things the trouble and the expense of such a measure, he thought that he could not afford to run away with her.

After dinner he hardly spoke to her; indeed, the room itself,—the same big room in which they had been assembled before the feast,—seemed to be ill-adapted for conversation. Again nobody talked to anybody, and the minutes went very heavily till at last the carriages were there to take them all home. "They arranged that you should sit next to her," said Lady Carbury to her son, as they were in the carriage.

"Oh, I suppose that came naturally;—one young man and one young woman, you know."

"Those things are always arranged, and they would not have done it unless they had thought that it would please Mr. Melmotte. Oh, Felix! if you can bring it about."

"I shall if I can, mother; you needn't make a fuss about it."

"No, I won't. You cannot wonder that I should be anxious. You behaved beautifully to her at dinner; I was so happy to see you together. Good night, Felix, and God bless you!" she said again, as they were parting for the night. "I shall be the happiest and the proudest mother in England if this comes about."

CHAPTER XXI.

Everybody goes to them.

When the Melmottes went from Caversham the house was very desolate. The task of entertaining these people was indeed over, and had the return to London been fixed for a certain near day, there would have been comfort at any rate among the ladies of the family. But this was so far from being the case that the Thursday and Friday passed without anything being settled, and dreadful fears began to fill the minds of Lady Pomona and Sophia Longestaffe. Georgiana was also impatient, but she asserted boldly that treachery, such as that which her mother and sister contemplated, was impossible. Their father, she thought, would not dare to propose it. On each of these days,—three or four times daily,—hints were given and questions were asked, but without avail. Mr. Longestaffe would not consent to have a day fixed till he had received some particular letter, and would not even listen to the suggestion of a day. "I suppose we can go at any rate on Tuesday," Georgiana said on the Friday evening. "I don't know why you should suppose anything of the kind," the father replied. Poor Lady Pomona was urged by her daughters to compel him to name a day; but Lady Pomona was less audacious in urging the request than her younger child, and at the same time less anxious for its completion. On the Sunday morning before they went to church there was a great discussion up-stairs. The Bishop of Elmham was going to preach at Caversham church, and the three ladies were dressed in their best London bonnets. They were in their mother's room, having just

completed the arrangements of their church-going toilet. It was supposed that the expected letter had arrived. Mr. Longestaffe had certainly received a dispatch from his lawyer, but had not as yet vouchsafed any reference to its contents. He had been more than ordinarily silent at breakfast, and,—so Sophia asserted,—more disagreeable than ever. The question had now arisen especially in reference to their bonnets. "You might as well wear them," said Lady Pomona, "for I am sure you will not be in London again this year."

"You don't mean it, mamma," said Sophia.

"I do, my dear. He looked like it when he put those papers back into his pocket. I know what his face means so well."

"It is not possible," said Sophia. "He promised, and he got us to have those horrid people because he promised."

"Well, my dear, if your father says that we can't go back, I suppose we must take his word for it. It is he must decide of course. What he meant I suppose was, that he would take us back if he could."

"Mamma!" shouted Georgiana. Was there to be treachery not only on the part of their natural adversary, who, adversary though he was, had bound himself to terms by a treaty, but treachery also in their own camp!

"My dear, what can we do?" said Lady Pomona.

"Do!" Georgiana was now going to speak out plainly. "Make him understand that we are not going to be sat upon like that. I'll do something, if that's going to be the way of it. If he treats me like that I'll run off with the first man that will take me, let him be who it may."

"Don't talk like that, Georgiana, unless you wish to kill me."

"I'll break his heart for him. He does not care about us,—not the least,—whether we are happy or miserable; but he cares very much about the family name. I'll tell him that I'm not going to be a slave. I'll marry a London tradesman before I'll stay down here." The younger Miss Longestaffe was lost in passion at the prospect before her.

"Oh, Georgey, don't say such horrid things as that," pleaded her sister.

"It's all very well for you, Sophy. You've got George Whitstable."

"I haven't got George Whitstable."

"Yes, you have, and your fish is fried. Dolly does just what he pleases, and spends money as fast as he likes. Of course it makes no difference to you, mamma, where you are."

"You are very unjust," said Lady Pomona, wailing, "and you say horrid things."

"I ain't unjust at all. It doesn't matter to you. And Sophy is the same as settled. But I'm to be sacrificed! How am I to see anybody down here in this horrid hole? Papa promised and he must keep his word."

Then there came to them a loud voice calling to them from the hall. "Are any of you coming to church, or are you going to keep the carriage waiting all day?" Of course they were all going to church. They always did go to church when they were at Caversham; and would more especially do so to-day, because of the bishop and because of the bonnets. They trooped down into the hall and into the carriage, Lady Pomona leading the way. Georgiana stalked along, passing her father at the front door without condescending to look at him.

Not a word was spoken on the way to church, or on the way home. During the service Mr. Longestaffe stood up in the corner of his pew, and repeated the responses in a loud voice. In performing this duty he had been an example to the parish all his life. The three ladies knelt on their hassocks in the most becoming fashion, and sat during the sermon without the slightest sign either of weariness or of attention. They did not collect the meaning of any one combination of sentences. It was nothing to them whether the bishop had or had not a meaning. Endurance of that kind was their strength. Had the bishop preached for forty-five minutes instead of half an hour they would not have complained. It was the same kind of endurance which enabled Georgiana to go on from year to year waiting for a husband of the proper sort. She could put up with any amount of tedium if only the fair chance of obtaining ultimate relief were not denied to her. But to be kept at Caversham all the summer would be as bad as hearing a bishop preach for ever! After the service they came back to lunch, and that meal also was eaten in silence. When it was over the head of the family put himself into the dining-room arm-chair, evidently meaning to be left alone there. In that case he would have meditated upon his troubles till he went to sleep, and would have thus got through the afternoon with comfort. But this was denied to him. The two daughters remained steadfast while the things were being removed; and Lady Pomona, though she made one attempt to leave the room, returned when she found that her daughters would not follow her. Georgiana had told her sister that she meant to "have it out" with her father, and Sophia had of course remained in the room in obedience to her sister's behest. When the last tray had been taken out,

Georgiana began. "Papa, don't you think you could settle now when we are to go back to town? Of course we want to know about engagements and all that. There is Lady Monogram's party on Wednesday. We promised to be there ever so long ago."

"You had better write to Lady Monogram and say you can't keep your engagement."

"But why not, papa? We could go up on Wednesday morning."

"You can't do anything of the kind."

"But, my dear, we should all like to have a day fixed," said Lady Pomona. Then there was a pause. Even Georgiana, in her present state of mind, would have accepted some distant, even some undefined time, as a compromise.

"Then you can't have a day fixed," said Mr. Longestaffe.

"How long do you suppose that we shall be kept here?" said Sophia, in a low constrained voice.

"I do not know what you mean by being kept here. This is your home, and this is where you may make up your minds to live."

"But we are to go back?" demanded Sophia. Georgiana stood by in silence, listening, resolving, and biding her time.

"You'll not return to London this season," said Mr. Longestaffe, turning himself abruptly to a newspaper which he held in his hands.

"Do you mean that that is settled?" said Lady Pomona.

"I mean to say that that is settled," said Mr. Longestaffe.

Was there ever treachery like this! The indignation in Georgiana's mind approached almost to virtue as she

thought of her father's falseness. She would not have left town at all but for that promise. She would not have contaminated herself with the Melmottes but for that promise. And now she was told that the promise was to be absolutely broken, when it was no longer possible that she could get back to London,—even to the house of the hated Primeros,—without absolutely running away from her father's residence! "Then, papa," she said, with affected calmness, "you have simply and with premeditation broken your word to us."

"How dare you speak to me in that way, you wicked child!"

"I am not a child, papa, as you know very well. I am my own mistress,——by law."

"Then go and be your own mistress. You dare to tell me, your father, that I have premeditated a falsehood! If you tell me that again, you shall eat your meals in your own room or not eat them in this house."

"Did you not promise that we should go back if we would come down and entertain these people?"

"I will not argue with a child, insolent and disobedient as you are. If I have anything to say about it, I will say it to your mother. It should be enough for you that I, your father, tell you that you have to live here. Now go away, and if you choose to be sullen, go and be sullen where I shan't see you." Georgiana looked round on her mother and sister and then marched majestically out of the room. She still meditated revenge, but she was partly cowed, and did not dare in her father's presence to go on with her reproaches. She stalked off into the room in which they generally lived, and there she stood panting with anger, breathing indignation through her nostrils. "And you mean to put up with it, mamma?" she said.

"What can we do, my dear?"

"I will do something. I'm not going to be cheated and swindled and have my life thrown away into the bargain. I have always behaved well to him. I have never run up bills without saying anything about them." This was a cut at her elder sister, who had once got into some little trouble of that kind. "I have never got myself talked about with anybody. If there is anything to be done I always do it. I have written his letters for him till I have been sick, and when you were ill I never asked him to stay out with us after two or half-past two at the latest. And now he tells me that I am to eat my meals up in my bedroom because I remind him that he distinctly promised to take us back to London. Did he not promise, mamma?"

"I understood so, my dear."

"You know he promised, mamma. If I do anything now he must bear the blame of it. I am not going to keep myself straight for the sake of the family, and then be treated in that way."

"You do that for your own sake, I suppose," said her sister.

"It is more than you've been able to do for anybody's sake," said Georgiana, alluding to a very old affair,—to an ancient flirtation, in the course of which the elder daughter had made a foolish and a futile attempt to run away with an officer of dragoons whose private fortune was very moderate. Ten years had passed since that, and the affair was never alluded to except in moments of great bitterness.

"I've kept myself as straight as you have," said Sophia. "It's easy enough to be straight, when a person never cares for anybody, and nobody cares for a person."

"My dears, if you quarrel what am I to do?" said their mother.

"It is I that have to suffer," continued Georgiana. "Does he expect me to find anybody here that I could take? Poor George Whitstable is not much; but there is nobody else at all."

"You may have him if you like," said Sophia, with a chuck of her head.

"Thank you, my dear, but I shouldn't like it at all. I haven't come to that quite yet."

"You were talking of running away with somebody."

"I shan't run away with George Whitstable; you may be sure of that. I'll tell you what I shall do,—I will write papa a letter. I suppose he'll condescend to read it. If he won't take me up to town himself, he must send me up to the Primeros. What makes me most angry in the whole thing is that we should have condescended to be civil to the Melmottes down in the country. In London one does those things, but to have them here was terrible!"

During that entire afternoon nothing more was said. Not a word passed between them on any subject beyond those required by the necessities of life. Georgiana had been as hard to her sister as to her father, and Sophia in her quiet way resented the affront. She was now almost reconciled to the sojourn in the country, because it inflicted a fitting punishment on Georgiana, and the presence of Mr. Whitstable at a distance of not more than ten miles did of course make a difference to herself. Lady Pomona complained of a headache, which was always an excuse with her for not speaking;—and Mr. Longestaffe went to sleep. Georgiana during the whole afternoon remained apart, and on the next morning the

head of the family found the following letter on his dressing-table;—

"My dear Papa,—

"I don't think you ought to be surprised because we feel that our going up to town is so very important to us. If we are not to be in London at this time of the year we can never see anybody, and of course you know what that must mean for me. If this goes on about Sophia, it does not signify for her, and, though mamma likes London, it is not of real importance. But it is very, very hard upon me. It isn't for pleasure that I want to go up. There isn't so very much pleasure in it. But if I'm to be buried down here at Caversham, I might just as well be dead at once. If you choose to give up both houses for a year, or for two years, and take us all abroad, I should not grumble in the least. There are very nice people to be met abroad, and perhaps things go easier that way than in town. And there would be nothing for horses, and we could dress very cheap and wear our old things. I'm sure I don't want to run up bills. But if you would only think what Caversham must be to me, without any one worth thinking about within twenty miles, you would hardly ask me to stay here.

"You certainly did say that if we would come down here with those Melmottes we should be taken back to town, and you cannot be surprised that we should be disappointed when we are told that we are to be kept here after that. It makes me feel that life is so hard that I can't bear it. I see other girls having such chances when I have none, that sometimes I think I don't know what will happen to me." (This was the nearest approach which she dared to make in writing to that threat which she had uttered to her mother of running away with

completed the arrangements of their church-going toilet. It was supposed that the expected letter had arrived. Mr. Longestaffe had certainly received a dispatch from his lawyer, but had not as yet vouchsafed any reference to its contents. He had been more than ordinarily silent at breakfast, and,—so Sophia asserted,—more disagreeable than ever. The question had now arisen especially in reference to their bonnets. "You might as well wear them," said Lady Pomona, "for I am sure you will not be in London again this year."

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Mr. Primero; and if one woman, it was Mrs. Primero. Primero, whom Mr. Longestaffe regarded as quite an upstart, and anything but a gentleman, owed no man anything. He paid his tradesmen punctually, and never met the squire of Caversham without seeming to make a parade of his virtue in that direction. He had spent many thousands for his party in county elections and borough elections, and was now himself member for a metropolitan district. He was a radical, of course, or, according to Mr. Longestaffe's view of his political conduct, acted and voted on the radical side because there was nothing to be got by voting and acting on the other. And now there had come into Suffolk a rumour that Mr. Primero was to have a peerage. To others the rumour was incredible, but Mr. Longestaffe believed it, and to Mr. Longestaffe that belief was an agony. A Baron Bundlesham just at his door, and such a Baron Bundlesham, would be more than Mr. Longestaffe could endure. It was quite impossible that his daughter should be entertained in London by the Primeros.

But another suggestion had been made. Georgiana's letter had been laid on her father's table on the Monday morning. On the following morning, when there could have been no intercourse with London by letter, Lady Pomona called her younger daughter to her, and handed her a note to read. "Your papa has this moment given it me. Of course you must judge for yourself." This was the note;—

"My Dear Mr. Longestaffe,

"As you seem determined not to return to London this season, perhaps one of your young ladies would like to come to us. Mrs. Melmotte would be delighted to

have Miss Georgiana for June and July. If so, she need only give Mrs. Melmotte a day's notice.

"Yours truly,

"AUGUSTUS MELMOTTE."

Georgiana, as soon as her eye had glanced down the one side of note paper on which this invitation was written, looked up for the date. It was without a date, and had, she felt sure, been left in her father's hands to be used as he might think fit. She breathed very hard. Both her father and mother had heard her speak of these Melmottes, and knew what she thought of them. There was an insolence in the very suggestion. But at the first moment she said nothing of that. "Why shouldn't I go to the Primeros?" she asked.

"Your father will not hear of it. He dislikes them especially."

"And I dislike the Melmottes. I dislike the Primeros of course, but they are not so bad as the Melmottes. That would be dreadful."

"You must judge for yourself, Georgiana."

"It is that,—or staying here?"

"I think so, my dear."

"If papa chooses I don't know why I am to mind. It will be awfully disagreeable,—absolutely disgusting!"

"She seemed to be very quiet."

"Pooh, mamma! Quiet! She was quiet here because she was afraid of us. She isn't yet used to be with people like us. She'll get over that if I'm in the house with her. And then she is, oh! so frightfully vulgar! She must have been the very sweeping of the gutters. Did you not see it, mamma? She could not even open her mouth, she was so ashamed of herself. I shouldn't wonder if they turned out to be something quite horrid.

They make me shudder. Was there ever anything so dreadful to look at as he is?"

"Everybody goes to them," said Lady Pomona. "The Duchess of Stevenage has been there over and over again, and so has Lady Auld Reekie. Everybody goes to their house."

"But everybody doesn't go and live with them. Oh, mamma,—to have to sit down to breakfast every day for ten weeks with that man and that woman!"

"Perhaps they'll let you have your breakfast upstairs."

"But to have to go out with them;—walking into the room after her! Only think of it!"

"But you are so anxious to be in London, my dear."

"Of course I am anxious. What other chance have I, mamma? And, oh dear, I am so tired of it! Pleasure, indeed! Papa talks of pleasure. If papa had to work half as hard as I do, I wonder what he'd think of it. I suppose I must do it. I know it will make me so ill that I shall almost die under it. Horrid, horrid people! And papa to propose it, who has always been so proud of everything,—who used to think so much of being with the right set."

"Things are changed, Georgiana," said the anxious mother.

"Indeed they are when papa wants me to go and stay with people like that. Why, mamma, the apothecary in Bungay is a fine gentleman compared with Mr. Melmotte, and his wife is a fine lady compared with Madame Melmotte. But I'll go. If papa chooses me to be seen with such people it is not my fault. There will be no disgracing one's self after that. I don't believe in the least that any decent man would propose to a girl in such a house, and you and papa must not be surprised if I take

some horrid creature from the Stock Exchange. Papa has altered his ideas; and so, I suppose, I had better alter mine."

Georgiana did not speak to her father that night, but Lady Pomona informed Mr. Longestaffe that Mr. Melmotte's invitation was to be accepted. She herself would write a line to Madame Melmotte, and Georgiana would go up on the Friday following. "I hope she'll like it," said Mr. Longestaffe. The poor man had no intention of irony. It was not in his nature to be severe after that fashion. But to poor Lady Pomona the words sounded very cruel. How could any one like to live in a house with Mr. and Madame Melmotte!

On the Friday morning there was a little conversation between the two sisters, just before Georgiana's departure to the railway station, which was almost touching. She had endeavoured to hold up her head as usual, but had failed. The thing that she was going to do cowed her even in the presence of her sister. "Sophy, I do so envy you staying here."

"But it was you who were so determined to be in London."

"Yes; I was determined, and am determined. I've got to get myself settled somehow, and that can't be done down here. But you are not going to disgrace yourself."

"There's no disgrace in it, Georgey."

"Yes, there is. I believe the man to be a swindler and a thief; and I believe her to be anything low that you can think of. As to their pretensions to be gentlefolk, it is monstrous. The footmen and housemaids would be much better."

"Then don't go, Georgey."

"I must go. It's the only chance that is left. If I

were to remain down here everybody would say that I was on the shelf. You are going to marry Whitstable, and you'll do very well. It isn't a big place, but there's no debt on it, and Whitstable himself isn't a bad sort of fellow."

"Is he, now?"

"Of course he hasn't much to say for himself, for he's always at home. But he is a gentleman."

"That he certainly is."

"As for me I shall give over caring about gentlemen now. The first man that comes to me with four or five thousand a year, I'll take him, though he'd come out of Newgate or Bedlam. And I shall always say it has been papa's doing."

And so Georgiana Longestaffe went up to London and stayed with the Melmottes.

CHAPTER XXII.

Lord Nidderdale's Morality.

It was very generally said in the city about this time that the Great South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway was the very best thing out. It was known that Mr. Melmotte had gone into it with heart and hand. There were many who declared,—with gross injustice to the Great Fisker,—that the railway was Melmotte's own child, that he had invented it, advertised it, agitated it, and floated it; but it was not the less popular on that account. A railway from Salt Lake City to Mexico no doubt had much of the flavour of a castle in Spain. Our far-western American brethren are supposed to be imaginative. Mexico has not a reputation among us for commercial security, or that stability which produces its four,

five, or six per cent. with the regularity of clockwork. But there was the Panama railway, a small affair which had paid twenty-five per cent.; and there was the great line across the continent to San Francisco, in which enormous fortunes had been made. It came to be believed that men with their eyes open might do as well with the Great South Central as had ever been done before with other speculations, and this belief was no doubt founded on Mr. Melmotte's partiality for the enterprise. Mr. Fisker had "struck 'ile" when he induced his partner, Montague, to give him a note to the great man.

Paul Montague himself, who cannot be said to have been a man having his eyes open, in the city sense of the word, could not learn how the thing was progressing. At the regular meetings of the Board, which never sat for above half an hour, two or three papers were read by Miles Grendall. Melmotte himself would speak a few slow words, intended to be cheery, and always indicative of triumph, and then everybody would agree to everything, somebody would sign something, and the "Board" for that day would be over. To Paul Montague this was very unsatisfactory. More than once or twice he endeavoured to stay the proceedings, not as disapproving, but "simply as desirous of being made to understand;" but the silent scorn of his chairman put him out of countenance, and the opposition of his colleagues was a barrier which he was not strong enough to overcome. Lord Alfred Grendall would declare that he "did not think all that was at all necessary." Lord Nidderdale, with whom Montague had now become intimate at the Beargarden, would nudge him in the ribs and bid him hold his tongue. Mr. Cohenlupe would make a little speech in fluent but broken English, assuring the Committee that everything was being done after the approved

city fashion. Sir Felix, after the first two meetings, was never there. And thus Paul Montague, with a sorely burdened conscience, was carried along as one of the Directors of the Great South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway Company.

I do not know whether the burden was made lighter to him or heavier, by the fact that the immediate pecuniary result was certainly very comfortable. The Company had not yet been in existence quite six weeks,—or at any rate Melmotte had not been connected with it above that time,—and it had already been suggested to him twice that he should sell fifty shares at £112 10*s*. He did not even yet know how many shares he possessed, but on both occasions he consented to the proposal, and on the following day received a cheque for £625,—that sum representing the profit over and above the original nominal price of £100 a share. The suggestion was made to him by Miles Grendall, and when he asked some questions as to the manner in which the shares had been allocated, he was told that all that would be arranged in accordance with the capital invested and must depend on the final disposition of the Californian property. "But from what we see, old fellow," said Miles, "I don't think you have anything to fear. You seem to be about the best in of them all. Melmotte wouldn't advise you to sell out gradually, if he didn't look upon the thing as a certain income as far as you are concerned."

Paul Montague understood nothing of all this, and felt that he was standing on ground which might be blown from under his feet at any moment. The uncertainty, and what he feared might be the dishonesty, of the whole thing, made him often very miserable. In those wretched moments his conscience was asserting itself. But again there were times in which he also was almost triumphant,

and in which he felt the delight of his wealth. Though he was snubbed at the Board when he wanted explanations, he received very great attention outside the board-room from those connected with the enterprise. Melmotte had asked him to dine two or three times. Mr. Cohenlupe had begged him to go down to his little place at Rickmansworth,—an entreaty with which Montague had not as yet complied. Lord Alfred was always gracious to him, and Nidderdale and Carbury were evidently anxious to make him one of their set at the club. Many other houses became open to him from the same source. Though Melmotte was supposed to be the inventor of the railway, it was known that Fisker, Montague, and Montague were largely concerned in it, and it was known also that Paul Montague was one of the Montagues named in that firm. People, both in the City and the West End, seemed to think that he knew all about it, and treated him as though some of the manna falling from that heaven were at his disposition. There were results from this which were not unpleasing to the young man. He only partially resisted the temptation; and though determined at times to probe the affair to the bottom, was so determined only at times. The money was very pleasant to him. The period would now soon arrive before which he understood himself to be pledged not to make a distinct offer to Henrietta Carbury; and when that period should have been passed, it would be delightful to him to know that he was possessed of property sufficient to enable him to give a wife a comfortable home. In all his aspirations, and in all his fears, he was true to Hetta Carbury, and made her the centre of his hopes. Nevertheless, had Hetta known everything, it may be feared that she would have at any rate endeavoured to dismiss him from her heart.

There was considerable uneasiness in the bosoms of others of the Directors, and a disposition to complain against the Grand Director, arising from a grievance altogether different from that which afflicted Montague. Neither had Sir Felix Carbury nor Lord Nidderdale been invited to sell shares, and consequently neither of them had received any remuneration for the use of their names. They knew well that Montague had sold shares. He was quite open on the subject, and had told Felix, whom he hoped some day to regard as his brother-in-law, exactly what shares he had sold, and for how much;—and the two men had endeavoured to make the matter intelligible between themselves. The original price of the shares being £100 each, and £12 10*s.* a share having been paid to Montague as the premium, it was to be supposed that the original capital was re-invested in other shares. But each owned to the other that the matter was very complicated to him, and Montague could only write to Hamilton K. Fisker at San Francisco asking for explanation. As yet he had received no answer. But it was not the wealth flowing into Montague's hands which embittered Nidderdale and Carbury. They understood that he had really brought money into the concern, and was therefore entitled to take money out of it. Nor did it occur to them to grudge Melmotte his more noble pickings, for they knew how great a man was Melmotte. Of Cohenlupe's doings they heard nothing; but he was a regular city man, and had probably supplied funds. Cohenlupe was too deep for their inquiry. But they knew that Lord Alfred had sold shares, and had received the profit; and they knew also how utterly impossible it was that Lord Alfred should have produced capital. If Lord Alfred Grendall was entitled to plunder, why were not they? And if their day for plunder had not yet come, why had

Lord Alfred's? And if there was so much cause to fear Lord Alfred that it was necessary to throw him a bone, why should not they also make themselves feared? Lord Alfred passed all his time with Melmotte,—had, as these young men said, become Melmotte's head valet,—and therefore had to be paid. But that reason did not satisfy the young men.

"You haven't sold any shares;—have you?" This question Sir Felix asked Lord Nidderdale at the club. Nidderdale was constant in his attendance at the Board, and Felix was not a little afraid that he might be jockied also by him.

"Not a share."

"Nor got any profits?"

"Not a shilling of any kind. As far as money is concerned my only transaction has been my part of the expense of Fisker's dinner."

"What do you get then, by going into the city?" asked Sir Felix.

"I'm blessed if I know what I get. I suppose something will turn up some day."

"In the meantime, you know, there are our names. And Grendall is making a fortune out of it."

"Poor old duffer," said his lordship. "If he's doing so well, I think Miles ought to be made to pay up something of what he owes. I think we ought to tell him that we shall expect him to have the money ready when that bill of Vossner's comes round."

"Yes, by George; let's tell him that. Will you do it?"

"Not that it will be the least good. It would be quite unnatural to him to pay anything."

"Fellows used to pay their gambling debts," said Sir

Felix, who was still in funds, and who still held a considerable assortment of I O U's.

"They don't now,—unless they like it. How did a fellow manage before, if he hadn't got it?"

"He went smash," said Sir Felix, "and disappeared and was never heard of any more. It was just the same as if he'd been found cheating. I believe a fellow might cheat now and nobody'd say anything!"

"I shouldn't," said Lord Nidderdale. "What's the use of being beastly ill-natured? I'm not very good at saying my prayers, but I do think there's something in that bit about forgiving people. Of course cheating isn't very nice: and it isn't very nice for a fellow to play when he knows he can't pay; but I don't know that it's worse than getting drunk like Dolly Longestaffe, or quarrelling with everybody as Glasslough does,—or trying to marry some poor devil of a girl merely because she's got money. I believe in living in glass houses, but I don't believe in throwing stones. Do you ever read the Bible, Carbury?"

"Read the Bible! Well;—yes;—no;—that is, I suppose, I used to do."

"I often think I shouldn't have been the first to pick up a stone and pitch it at that woman. Live and let live;—that's my motto."

"But you agree that we ought to do something about these shares?" said Sir Felix, thinking that this doctrine of forgiveness might be carried too far.

"Oh, certainly. I'll let old Grendall live with all my heart; but then he ought to let me live too. Only, who's to bell the cat?"

"What cat?"

"It's no good our going to old Grendall," said Lord Nidderdale, who had some understanding in the matter,

"nor yet to young Grendall. The one would only grunt and say nothing, and the other would tell every lie that came into his head. The cat in this matter I take to be our great master, Augustus Melmotte."

This little meeting occurred on the day after Felix Carbury's return from Suffolk, and at a time at which, as we know, it was the great duty of his life to get the consent of old Melmotte to his marriage with Marie Melmotte. In doing that he would have to put one bell on the cat, and he thought that for the present that was sufficient. In his heart of hearts he was afraid of Melmotte. But then, as he knew very well, Nidderdale was intent on the same object. Nidderdale, he thought, was a very queer fellow. That talking about the Bible, and the forgiving of trespasses, was very queer; and that allusion to the marrying of heiresses very queer indeed. He knew that Nidderdale wanted to marry the heiress, and Nidderdale must also know that he wanted to marry her. And yet Nidderdale was indelicate enough to talk about it! And now the man asked who should bell the cat! "You go there oftener than I do, and perhaps you could do it best," said Felix.

"Go where?"

"To the Board."

"But you're always at his house. He'd be civil to me, perhaps, because I'm a lord: but then, for the same reason, he'd think I was the bigger fool of the two."

"I don't see that at all," said Sir Felix.

"I ain't afraid of him, if you mean that," continued Lord Nidderdale. "He's a wretched old reprobate, and I don't doubt but he'd skin you and me if he could make money of our carcasses. But as he can't skin me, I'll have a shy at him. On the whole I think he rather likes me, because I've always been on the square with

him. If it depended on him, you know, I should have the girl to-morrow."

"Would you?" Sir Felix did not at all mean to doubt his friend's assertion, but felt it hard to answer so very strange a statement.

"But then she don't want me, and I ain't quite sure that I want her. Where the devil would a fellow find himself if the money wasn't all there?" Lord Nidderdale then sauntered away, leaving the baronet in a deep study of thought as to such a condition of things as that which his lordship had suggested. Where the—mischief would he, Sir Felix Carbury, be, if he were to marry the girl, and then to find that the money was not all there?

On the following Friday, which was the Board day, Nidderdale went to the great man's offices in Abchurch Lane, and so contrived that he walked with the great man to the Board meeting. Melmotte was always very gracious in his manner to Lord Nidderdale, but had never, up to this moment, had any speech with his proposed son-in-law about business. "I wanted just to ask you something," said the lord, hanging on the chairman's arm.

"Anything you please, my lord."

"Don't you think that Carbury and I ought to have some shares to sell?"

"No, I don't,—if you ask me."

"Oh;—I didn't know. But why shouldn't we as well as the others?"

"Have you and Sir Felix put any money into it?"

"Well, if you come to that, I don't suppose we have. How much has Lord Alfred put into it?"

"*I* have taken shares for Lord Alfred," said Melmotte, putting very heavy emphasis on the personal pronoun. "If it suits me to advance money to Lord Afred Grendall,

I suppose I may do so without asking your lordship's consent, or that of Sir Felix Carbury."

"Oh, certainly. I don't want to make inquiry as to what you do with your money."

"I'm sure you don't, and, therefore, we won't say anything more about it. You wait awhile, Lord Nidderdale, and you'll find it will come all right. If you've got a few thousand pounds loose, and will put them into the concern, why, of course you can sell; and, if the shares are up, can sell at a profit. It's presumed just at present that, at some early day, you'll qualify for your directorship by doing so, and till that is done, the shares are allocated to you, but cannot be transferred to you."

"That's it, is it," said Lord Nidderdale, pretending to understand all about it.

"If things go on as we hope they will between you and Marie, you can have pretty nearly any number of shares that you please;—that is, if your father consents to a proper settlement."

"I hope it'll all go smooth, I'm sure," said Nidderdale. "Thank you; I'm ever so much obliged to you, and I'll explain it all to Carbury."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Yes;—I'm a Baronet."

How eager Lady Carbury was that her son should at once go in form to Marie's father and make his proposition may be easily understood. "My dear Felix," she said, standing over his bedside a little before noon, "pray don't put it off; you don't know how many slips there may be between the cup and the lip."

"It's everything to get him in a good humour," pleaded Sir Felix.

"But the young lady will feel that she is ill-used."

"There's no fear of that; she's all right. What am I to say to him about money? That's the question."

"I shouldn't think of dictating anything, Felix."

"Nidderdale, when he was on before, stipulated for a certain sum down; or his father did for him. So much cash was to be paid over before the ceremony, and it only went off because Nidderdale wanted the money to do what he liked with."

"You wouldn't mind having it settled?"

"No;—I'd consent to that on condition that the money was paid down, and the income insured to me,—say £7,000 or £8,000 a year. I wouldn't do it for less, mother; it wouldn't be worth while."

"But you have nothing left of your own."

"I've got a throat that I can cut, and brains that I can blow out," said the son, using an argument which he conceived might be efficacious with his mother; though, had she known him, she might have been sure that no man lived less likely to cut his own throat or blow out his own brains.

"Oh, Felix! how brutal it is to speak to me in that way."

"It may be brutal; but you know, mother, business is business. You want me to marry this girl because of her money."

"You want to marry her yourself."

"I'm quite a philosopher about it. I want her money; and when one wants money, one should make up one's mind how much or how little one means to take, —and whether one is sure to get it."

"I don't think there can be any doubt."

"If I were to marry her, and if the money wasn't there, it would be very like cutting my throat then, mother. If a man plays and loses, he can play again and perhaps win; but when a fellow goes in for an heiress, and gets the wife without the money, he feels a little hampered you know."

"Of course he'd pay the money first."

"It's very well to say that. Of course he ought; but it would be rather awkward to refuse to go into church after everything had been arranged because the money hadn't been paid over. He's so clever, that he'd contrive that a man shouldn't know whether the money had been paid or not. You can't carry £10,000 a year about in your pocket, you know. If you'll go, mother, perhaps I might think of getting up."

Lady Carbury saw the danger, and turned over the affair on every side in her own mind. But she could also see the house in Grosvenor Square, the expenditure without limit, the congregating duchesses, the general acceptation of the people, and the mercantile celebrity of the man. And she could weigh against that the absolute pennilessness of her baronet-son. As he was, his condition was hopeless. Such a one must surely run some risk. The embarrassments of such a man as Lord Nidderdale were only temporary. There were the family estates, and the marquisate, and a golden future for him; but there was nothing coming to Felix in the future. All the goods he would ever have of his own, he had now;—position, a title, and a handsome face. Surely he could afford to risk something! Even the ruins and wreck of such wealth as that displayed in Grosvenor Square would be better than the baronet's present condition. And then, though it was possible that old Melmotte should be ruined some day, there could be no doubt as to his pre-

sent means; and would it not be probable that he would make hay while the sun shone by securing his daughter's position. She visited her son again on the next morning, which was Sunday, and again tried to persuade him to the marriage. "I think you should be content to run a little risk," she said.

Sir Felix had been unlucky at cards on Saturday night, and had taken, perhaps, a little too much wine. He was at any rate sulky, and in a humour to resent interference. "I wish you'd leave me alone," he said, "to manage my own business."

"Is it not my business too?"

"No; you haven't got to marry her, and to put up with these people. I shall make up my mind what to do myself, and I don't want anybody to meddle with me."

"You ungrateful boy!"

"I understand all about that. Of course I'm ungrateful when I don't do everything just as you wish it. You don't do any good. You only set me against it all."

"How do you expect to live, then? Are you always to be a burden on me and your sister? I wonder that you've no shame. Your cousin Roger is right. I will quit London altogether, and leave you to your own wretchedness."

"That's what Roger says; is it? I always thought Roger was a fellow of that sort."

"He is the best friend I have." What would Roger have thought had he heard this assertion from Lady Carbury?

"He's an ill-tempered, close-fisted, interfering cad, and if he meddles with my affairs again, I shall tell him what I think of him. Upon my word, mother, these little

disputes up in my bedroom ain't very pleasant. Of course it's your house; but if you do allow me a room, I think you might let me have it to myself." It was impossible for Lady Carbury, in her present mood, and in his present mood, to explain to him that in no other way and at no other time could she ever find him. If she waited till he came down to breakfast, he escaped from her in five minutes, and then he returned no more till some unholy hour in the morning. She was as good a pelican as ever allowed the blood to be torn from her own breast to satisfy the greed of her young, but she felt that she should have something back for her blood, —some return for her sacrifices. This chick would take all as long as there was a drop left, and then resent the fondling of the mother-bird as interference. Again and again there came upon her moments in which she thought that Roger Carbury was right. And yet she knew that when the time came she would not be able to be severe. She almost hated herself for the weakness of her own love,—but she acknowledged it. If he should fall utterly, she must fall with him. In spite of his cruelty, his callous hardness, his insolence to herself, his wickedness and ruinous indifference to the future, she must cling to him to the last. All that she had done, and all that she had borne,—all that she was doing and bearing,—was it not for his sake?

Sir Felix had been in Grosvenor Square since his return from Carbury, and had seen Madame Melmotte and Marie; but he had seen them together, and not a word had been said about the engagement. He could not make much use of the elder woman. She was as gracious as was usual with her; but then she was never very gracious. She had told him that Miss Longestaffe was coming to her, which was a great bore, as the young

lady was "fatigante." Upon this Marie had declared that she intended to like the young lady very much. "Pooh!" said Madame Melmotte. "You never like no person at all." At this Marie had looked over to her lover and smiled. "Ah, yes; that is all very well,—while it lasts; but you care for no friend." From which Felix had judged that Madame Melmotte at any rate knew of his offer, and did not absolutely disapprove of it. On the Saturday he had received a note at his club from Marie. "Come on Sunday at half-past two. You will find papa after lunch." This was in his possession when his mother visited him in his bedroom, and he had determined to obey the behest. But he would not tell her of his intention, because he had drunk too much wine, and was sulky.

At about three on Sunday he knocked at the door in Grosvenor Square and asked for the ladies. Up to the moment of his knocking,—even after he had knocked, and when the big porter was opening the door,—he intended to ask for Mr. Melmotte; but at the last his courage failed him, and he was shown up into the drawing-room. There he found Madame Melmotte, Marie, Georgiana Longestaffe, and—Lord Nidderdale. Marie looked anxiously into his face, thinking that he had already been with her father. He slid into a chair close to Madame Melmotte, and endeavoured to seem at his ease. Lord Nidderdale continued his flirtation with Miss Longestaffe,—a flirtation which she carried on in a half whisper, wholly indifferent to her hostess or the young lady of the house. "We know what brings you here," she said.

"I came on purpose to see you."

"I'm sure, Lord Nidderdale, you didn't expect to find me here."

"Lord bless you, I knew all about it, and came on purpose. It's a great institution; isn't it?"

"It's an institution you mean to belong to,—permanently."

"No, indeed. I did have thoughts about it as fellows do when they talk of going into the army or to the bar; but I couldn't pass. That fellow there is the happy man. I shall go on coming here, because you're here. I don't think you'll like it a bit, you know."

"I don't suppose I shall, Lord Nidderdale."

After awhile Marie contrived to be alone with her lover near one of the windows for a few seconds. "Papa is down-stairs in the book-room," she said. "Lord Alfred was told when he came that he was out." It was evident to Sir Felix that everything was prepared for him. "You go down," she continued, "and ask the man to show you into the book-room."

"Shall I come up again?"

"No; but leave a note for me here under cover to Madame Didon." Now Sir Felix was sufficiently at home in the house to know that Madame Didon was Madame Melmotte's own woman, commonly called Didon by the ladies of the family. "Or send it by post,—under cover to her. That will be better. Go at once, now." It certainly did seem to Sir Felix that the very nature of the girl was altered. But he went, just shaking hands with Madame Melmotte, and bowing to Miss Longestaffe.

In a few moments he found himself with Mr. Melmotte in the chamber which had been dignified with the name of the book-room. The great financier was accustomed to spend his Sunday afternoons here, generally with the company of Lord Alfred Grendall. It may be supposed that he was meditating on millions, and ar-

ranging the prices of money and funds for the New York, Paris, and London Exchanges. But on this occasion he was waked from slumber, which he seemed to have been enjoying with a cigar in his mouth. "How do you do, Sir Felix?" he said. "I suppose you want the ladies."

"I've just been in the drawing-room, but I thought I'd look in on you as I came down." It immediately occurred to Melmotte that the baronet had come about his share of the plunder out of the railway, and he at once resolved to be stern in his manner, and perhaps rude also. He believed that he should thrive best by resenting any interference with him in his capacity as financier. He thought that he had risen high enough to venture on such conduct, and experience had told him that men who were themselves only half-plucked, might easily be cowed by a savage assumption of superiority. And he, too, had generally the advantage of understanding the game, while those with whom he was concerned did not, at any rate, more than half understand it. He could thus trade either on the timidity or on the ignorance of his colleagues. When neither of these sufficed to give him undisputed mastery, then he cultivated the cupidity of his friends. He liked young associates because they were more timid and less greedy than their elders. Lord Nidderdale's suggestions had soon been put at rest, and Mr. Melmotte anticipated no greater difficulty with Sir Felix. Lord Alfred he had been obliged to buy.

"I'm very glad to see you, and all that," said Melmotte, assuming a certain exaltation of the eyebrows, which they who had many dealings with him often found to be very disagreeable; "but this is hardly a day for business, Sir Felix, nor,—yet a place for business."

Sir Felix wished himself at the Beargarden. He cer-

tainly had come about business,—business of a particular sort; but Marie had told him that of all days Sunday would be the best, and had also told him that her father was more likely to be in a good humour on Sunday than on any other day. Sir Felix felt that he had not been received with good humour. "I didn't mean to intrude, Mr. Melmotte," he said.

"I dare say not. I only thought I'd tell you. You might have been going to speak about that railway."

"Oh dear no."

"Your mother was saying to me down in the country that she hoped you attended to the business. I told her that there was nothing to attend to."

"My mother doesn't understand anything at all about it," said Sir Felix.

"Women never do. Well;—what can I do for you, now that you are here?"

"Mr. Melmotte, I'm come,—I'm come to;—in short, Mr. Melmotte, I want to propose myself as a suitor for your daughter's hand."

"The d—— you do!"

"Well, yes; and we hope you'll give us your consent."

"She knows you're coming then?"

"Yes;—she knows."

"And my wife;—does she know?"

"I've never spoken to her about it. Perhaps Miss Melmotte has."

"And how long have you and she understood each other?"

"I've been attached to her ever since I saw her," said Sir Felix. "I have indeed. I've spoken to her sometimes. You know how that kind of thing goes on."

"I'm blessed if I do. I know how it ought to go on. I know that when large sums of money are supposed to

be concerned, the young man should speak to the father before he speaks to the girl. He's a fool if he don't, if he wants to get the father's money. So she has given you a promise?"

"I don't know about a promise."

"Do you consider that she's engaged to you?"

"Not if she's disposed to get out of it," said Sir Felix, hoping that he might thus ingratiate himself with the father. "Of course, I should be awfully disappointed."

"She has consented to your coming to me?"

"Well, yes;—in a sort of a way. Of course she knows that it all depends on you."

"Not at all. She's of age. If she chooses to marry you, she can marry you. If that's all you want, her consent is enough. You're a baronet, I believe?"

"Oh, yes, I'm a baronet."

"And therefore you've come to your own property. You haven't to wait for your father to die, and I dare say you are indifferent about money."

This was a view of things which Sir Felix felt that he was bound to dispel, even at the risk of offending the father. "Not exactly that," he said. "I suppose you will give your daughter a fortune, of course."

"Then I wonder you didn't come to me before you went to her. If my daughter marries to please me, I shall give her money, no doubt. How much is neither here nor there. If she marries to please herself, without considering me, I shan't give her a farthing."

"I had hoped that you might consent, Mr. Melmotte."

"I've said nothing about that. It is possible. You're a man of fashion and have a title of your own,—and no doubt a property. If you'll show me that you've an income fit to maintain her, I'll think about it at any rate. What is your property, Sir Felix?"

What could three or four thousand a year, or even five or six matter to a man like Melmotte? It was thus that Sir Felix looked at it. When a man can hardly count his millions he ought not to ask questions about trifling sums of money. But the question had been asked, and the asking of such a question was no doubt within the prerogative of a proposed father-in-law. At any rate, it must be answered. For a moment it occurred to Sir Felix that he might conveniently tell the truth. It would be nasty for the moment, but there would be nothing to come after. Were he to do so he could not be dragged down lower and lower into the mire by cross examinings. There might be an end of all his hopes, but there would at the same time be an end of all his misery. But he lacked the necessary courage. "It isn't a large property, you know," he said.

"Not like the Marquis of Westminster's, I suppose," said the horrid, big, rich scoundrel.

"No;—not quite like that," said Sir Felix, with a sickly laugh.

"But you have got enough to support a baronet's title?"

"That depends on how you want to support it," said Sir Felix, putting off the evil day.

"Where's your family seat?"

"Carbury Manor, down in Suffolk, near the Longestaffes, is the old family place."

"That doesn't belong to you," said Melmotte, very sharply.

"No; not yet. But I'm the heir."

Perhaps if there is one thing in England more difficult than another to be understood by men born and bred out of England, it is the system under which titles and property descend together, or in various lines. The jurisdiction of our Courts of Law is complex, and so is

the business of Parliament. But the rules regulating them, though anomalous, are easy to the memory compared with the mixed anomalies of the peerage and primogeniture. They who are brought up among it, learn it as children do a language, but strangers who begin the study in advanced life, seldom make themselves perfect in it. It was everything to Melmotte that he should understand the ways of the country which he had adopted; and when he did not understand, he was clever at hiding his ignorance. Now he was puzzled. He knew that Sir Felix was a baronet, and therefore presumed him to be the head of the family. He knew that Carbury Manor belonged to Roger Carbury, and he judged by the name it must be an old family property. And now the baronet declared that he was heir to the man who was simply an Esquire. "Oh, the heir are you? But how did he get it before you? You're the head of the family?"

"Yes, I am the head of the family, of course," said Sir Felix, lying directly. "But the place won't be mine till he dies. It would take a long time to explain it all."

"He's a young man, isn't he?"

"No,—not what you'd call a young man. He isn't very old."

"If he were to marry and have children, how would it be then?"

Sir Felix was beginning to think that he might have told the truth with discretion. "I don't quite know how it would be. I have always understood that I am the heir. It's not very likely that he will marry."

"And in the meantime what is your own property?"

"My father left me money in the funds and in railway stock,—and then I am my mother's heir."

"You have done me the honour of telling me that you wish to marry my daughter."

"Certainly."

"Would you then object to inform me the amount and nature of the income on which you intend to support your establishment as a married man? I fancy that the position you assume justifies the question on my part." The bloated swindler, the vile city ruffian, was certainly taking a most ungenerous advantage of the young aspirant for wealth. It was then that Sir Felix felt his own position. Was he not a baronet, and a gentleman, and a very handsome fellow, and a man of the world who had been in a crack regiment? If this surfeited sponge of speculation, this crammed commercial cormorant, wanted more than that for his daughter, why could he not say so without asking disgusting questions such as these,—questions which it was quite impossible that a gentleman should answer? Was it not sufficiently plain that any gentleman proposing to marry the daughter of such a man as Melmotte, must do so under the stress of pecuniary embarrassment? Would it not be an understood bargain that as he provided the rank and position, she would provide the money? And yet the vulgar wretch took advantage of his assumed authority to ask these dreadful questions! Sir Felix stood silent, trying to look the man in the face, but failing;—wishing that he was well out of the house, and at the Beargarden. "You don't seem to be very clear about your own circumstances, Sir Felix. Perhaps you will get your lawyer to write to me."

"Perhaps that will be best," said the lover.

"Either that, or to give it up. My daughter, no doubt, will have money; but money expects money." At this moment Lord Alfred entered the room. "You're

very late to-day, Alfred. Why didn't you come as you said you would?"

"I was here more than an hour ago, and they said you were out."

"I haven't been out of this room all day,—except to lunch. Good morning, Sir Felix. Ring the bell, Alfred, and we'll have a little soda and brandy." Sir Felix had gone through some greeting with his fellow Director, Lord Alfred, and at last succeeded in getting Melmotte to shake hands with him before he went. "Do you know anything about that young fellow?" Melmotte asked as soon as the door was closed.

"He's a baronet without a shilling;—was in the army and had to leave it," said Lord Alfred as he buried his face in a big tumbler.

"Without a shilling! I supposed so. But he's heir to a place down in Suffolk;—eh?"

"Not a bit of it. It's the same name, and that's about all. Mr. Carbury has a small property there, and he might give it to me to-morrow. I wish he would, though there isn't much of it. That young fellow has nothing to do with it whatever."

"Hasn't he now?" Mr. Melmotte as he speculated upon it, almost admired the young man's impudence.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Miles Grendall's Triumph.

Sir Felix as he walked down to his club felt that he had been checkmated,—and was at the same time full of wrath at the insolence of the man who had so easily beaten him out of the field. As far as he could see, the game was over. No doubt he might marry Marie Melmotte. The father had told him so much himself, and he perfectly believed the truth of that oath which Marie had sworn. He did not doubt but that she'd stick to him close enough. She was in love with him, which was natural; and was a fool,—which was perhaps also natural. But romance was not the game which he was playing. People told him that when girls succeeded in marrying without their parents' consent, fathers were always constrained to forgive them at last. That might be the case with ordinary fathers. But Melmotte was decidedly not an ordinary father. He was,—so Sir Felix declared to himself,—perhaps the greatest brute ever created. Sir Felix could not but remember that elevation of the eyebrows, and the brazen forehead, and the hard mouth. He had found himself quite unable to stand up against Melmotte, and now he cursed and swore at the man as he was carried down to the Beargarden in a cab.

But what should he do? Should he abandon Marie Melmotte altogether, never go to Grosvenor Square again, and drop the whole family, including the Great Mexican Railway? Then an idea occurred to him. Nidderdale had explained to him the result of his application for shares. "You see we haven't bought any and therefore

can't sell any. There seems to be something in that. I shall explain it all to my governor, and get him to go a thou' or two. If he sees his way to get the money back, he'd do that and let me have the difference." On that Sunday afternoon Sir Felix thought over all this. "Why shouldn't he 'go a thou,' and get the difference?" He made a mental calculation. £12 10*s.* per £100! £125 for a thousand! and all paid in ready money. As far as Sir Felix could understand, directly the one operation had been perfected the thousand pounds would be available for another. As he looked into it with all his intelligence he thought that he began to perceive that that was the way in which the Melmottes of the world made their money. There was but one objection. He had not got the entire thousand pounds. But luck had been on the whole very good to him. He had more than the half of it in real money, lying at a bank in the city at which he had opened an account. And he had very much more than the remainder in I O U's from Dolly Longestaffe and Miles Grendall. In fact if every man had his own,—and his bosom glowed with indignation as he reflected on the injustice with which he was kept out of his own,—he could go into the city and take up his shares to-morrow, and still have ready money at his command. If he could do this, would not such conduct on his part be the best refutation of that charge of not having any fortune which Melmotte had brought against him? He would endeavour to work the money out of Dolly Longestaffe;—and he entertained an idea that though it would be impossible to get cash from Miles Grendall, he might use his claim against Miles in the city. Miles was Secretary to the Board, and might perhaps contrive that the money required for the shares should not be all ready money. Sir Felix was not very

clear about it, but thought that he might possibly in this way use the indebtedness of Miles Grendall. "How I do hate a fellow who does not pay up," he said to himself as he sat alone in his club, waiting for some friend to come in. And he formed in his head Draconic laws which he would fain have executed upon men who lost money at play and did not pay. "How the deuce fellows can look one in the face, is what I can't understand," he said to himself.

He thought over this great stroke of exhibiting himself to Melmotte as a capitalist till he gave up his idea of abandoning his suit. So he wrote a note to Marie Melmotte in accordance with her instructions.

"DEAR M.,

"Your father cut up very rough,—about money. Perhaps you had better see him yourself; or would your mother?

"Yours always, F."

This, as directed, he put under cover to Madame Didon,—Grosvenor Square, and posted at the club. He had put nothing at any rate in the letter which could commit him.

There was generally on Sundays a house dinner, so called, at eight o'clock. Five or six men would sit down, and would always gamble afterwards. On this occasion Dolly Longestaffe sauntered in at about seven in quest of sherry and bitters, and Felix found the opportunity a good one to speak of his money. "You couldn't cash your I O U's for me to-morrow;—could you?"

"To-morrow! oh, lord!"

"I'll tell you why. You know I'd tell you anything

because I think we are really friends. I'm after that daughter of Melmotte's."

"I'm told you're to have her."

"I don't know about that. I mean to try at any rate. I've gone in you know for that Board in the city."

"I don't know anything about Boards, my boy."

"Yes, you do, Dolly. You remember that American fellow, Montague's friend, that was here one night and won all our money."

"The chap that had the waistcoat, and went away in the morning to California. Fancy starting to California after a hard night. I always wondered whether he got there alive."

"Well;—I can't explain to you all about it, because you hate those kind of things."

"And because I am such a fool."

"I don't think you're a fool at all, but it would take a week. But it's absolutely essential for me to take up a lot of shares in the city to-morrow;—or perhaps Wednesday might do. I'm bound to pay for them, and old Melmotte will think that I'm utterly hard up if I don't. Indeed he said as much, and the only objection about me and this girl of his is as to money. Can't you understand, now, how important it may be?"

"It's always important to have a lot of money. I know that."

"I shouldn't have gone in for this kind of thing if I hadn't thought I was sure. You know how much you owe me, don't you?"

"Not in the least."

"It's about eleven hundred pounds!"

"I shouldn't wonder."

"And Miles Grendall owes me two thousand. Grass-

lough and Nidderdale when they lose always pay with Miles's I O U's."

"So should I, if I had them."

"It'll come to that soon that there won't be any other stuff going, and they really ain't worth anything. I don't see what's the use of playing when this rubbish is shoved about the table. As for Grendall himself, he has no feeling about it."

"Not the least, I should say."

"You'll try and get me the money, won't you, Dolly?"

"Melmotte has been at me twice. He wants me to agree to sell something. He's an old thief, and of course he means to rob me. You may tell him that if he'll let me have the money in the way I've proposed, you are to have a thousand pounds out of it. I don't know any other way."

"You could write me that,—in a business sort of way."

"I couldn't do that, Carbury. What's the use? I never write any letters. I can't do it. You tell him that; and if the sale comes off, I'll make it straight."

Miles Grendall also dined there, and after dinner, in the smoking-room, Sir Felix tried to do a little business with the Secretary. He began his operations with unusual courtesy, believing that the man must have some influence with the great distributor of shares. "I'm going to take up my shares in that company," said Sir Felix.

"Ah;—indeed." And Miles enveloped himself from head to foot in smoke.

"I didn't quite understand about it, but Nidderdale saw Melmotte and he has explained it. I think I shall go in for a couple of thousand on Wednesday."

"Oh;—ah."

"It will be the proper thing to do;—won't it?"

"Very good—thing to do?!" Miles Grendall smoked harder and harder as the suggestions were made to him.

"Is it always ready money?"

"Always ready money," said Miles shaking his head, as though in reprobation of so abominable an institution.

"I suppose they allow some time to their own Directors, if a deposit, say 50 per cent., is made for the shares?"

"They'll give you half the number, which would come to the same thing."

Sir Felix turned this over in his mind, but let him look at it as he would, could not see the truth of his companion's remark. "You know I should want to sell again,—for the rise."

"Oh; you'll want to sell again."

"And therefore I must have the full number."

"You could sell half the number, you know," said Miles.

"I'm determined to begin with ten shares;—that's £1,000. Well;—I have got the money, but I don't want to draw out so much. Couldn't you manage for me that I should get them on paying 50 per cent. down?"

"Melmotte does all that himself."

"You could explain, you know, that you are a little short in your own payments to me." This Sir Felix said, thinking it to be a delicate mode of introducing his claim upon the Secretary.

"That's private," said Miles frowning.

"Of course it's private; but if you would pay me the money I could buy the shares with it, though they are public."

"I don't think we could mix the two things together, Carbury."

"You can't help me?"

"Not in that way."

"Then, when, the deuce, will you pay me what you owe me?" Sir Felix was driven to this plain expression of his demand by the impassibility of his debtor. Here was a man who did not pay his debts of honour, who did not even propose any arrangement for paying them, and who yet had the impudence to talk of not mixing up private matters with affairs of business! It made the young baronet very sick. Miles Grendall smoked on in silence. There was a difficulty in answering the question, and he therefore made no answer. "Do you know how much you owe me?" continued the baronet, determined to persist now that he had commenced the attack. There was a little crowd of other men in the room, and the conversation about the shares had been commenced in an undertone. These two last questions Sir Felix had asked in a whisper, but his countenance showed plainly that he was speaking in anger.

"Of course I know," said Miles.

"Well?"

"I'm not going to talk about it here."

"Not going to talk about it here?"

"No. This is a public room."

"I am going to talk about it," said Sir Felix, raising his voice.

"Will any fellow come up-stairs and play a game of billiards?" said Miles Grendall rising from his chair. Then he walked slowly out of the room, leaving Sir Felix to take what revenge he pleased. For a moment Sir Felix thought that he would expose the transaction

to the whole room; but he was afraid, thinking that Miles Grendall was a more popular man than himself.

It was Sunday night; but not the less were the gamblers assembled in the card-room at about eleven. Dolly Longestaffe was there, and with him the two lords, and Sir Felix, and Miles Grendall of course, and, I regret to say, a much better man than any of them, Paul Montague. Sir Felix had doubted much as to the propriety of joining the party. What was the use of playing with a man who seemed by general consent to be liberated from any obligation to pay? But then if he did not play with him, where should he find another gambling table? They began with whist, but soon laid that aside and devoted themselves to loo. The least respected man in that confraternity was Grendall, and yet it was in compliance with the persistency of his suggestion that they gave up the nobler game. "Let's stick to whist; I like cutting out," said Grasslough. "It's much more jolly having nothing to do now and then; one can always bet," said Dolly shortly afterwards. "I hate loo," said Sir Felix in answer to a third application. "I like whist best," said Nidderdale, "but I'll play anything anybody likes;—pitch and toss if you please." But Miles Grendall had his way, and loo was the game.

At about two o'clock Grendall was the only winner. The play had not been very high, but nevertheless he had won largely. Whenever a large pool had collected itself he swept it into his garners. The men opposed to him hardly grudged him this stroke of luck. He had hitherto been unlucky; and they were able to pay him with his own paper, which was so valueless that they parted with it without a pang. Even Dolly Longestaffe seemed to have a supply of it. The only man there not so furnished was Montague, and while the sums won

were quite small he was allowed to pay with cash. But to Sir Felix it was frightful to see ready money going over to Miles Grendall, as under no circumstances could it be got back from him. "Montague," he said, "just change these for the time. I'll take them back, if you still have them when we've done." And he handed a lot of Miles's paper across the table. The result of course would be that Felix would receive so much real money, and that Miles would get back more of his own worthless paper. To Montague it would make no difference, and he did as he was asked;—or rather was preparing to do so, when Miles interfered. On what principle of justice could Sir Felix come between him and another man? "I don't understand this kind of thing," he said. "When I win from you, Carbury, I'll take my I O U's, as long as you have any."

"By George, that's kind."

"But I won't have them handed about the table to be changed."

"Pay them yourself, then," said Sir Felix, laying a handful down on the table.

"Don't let's have a row," said Lord Nidderdale.

"Carbury is always making a row," said Grasslough.

"Of course he is," said Miles Grendall.

"I don't make more row than anybody else; but I do say that as we have such a lot of these things, and as we all know that we don't get cash for them as we want it, Grendall shouldn't take money and walk off with it."

"Who is walking off?" said Miles.

"And why should you be entitled to Montague's money more than any of us?" asked Grasslough.

The matter was debated, and was thus decided. It was not to be allowed that Miles's paper should be

negotiated at the table in the manner that Sir Felix had attempted to adopt. But Mr. Grendall pledged his honour that when they broke up the party he would apply any money that he might have won to the redemption of his I O U's, paying a regular percentage to the holders of them. The decision made Sir Felix very cross. He knew that their condition at six or seven in the morning would not be favourable to such commercial accuracy,—which indeed would require an accountant to effect it; and he felt sure that Miles, if still a winner, would in truth walk off with the ready money.

For a considerable time he did not speak, and became very moderate in his play, tossing his cards about, almost always losing, but losing a minimum, and watching the board. He was sitting next to Grendall, and he thought that he observed that his neighbour moved his chair farther and farther away from him, and nearer to Dolly Longestaffe, who was next to him on the other side. This went on for an hour, during which Grendall still won,—and won heavily from Paul Montague. "I never saw a fellow have such a run of luck in my life," said Grasslough. "You've had two trumps dealt to you every hand almost since we began!"

"Ever so many hands I haven't played at all," said Miles.

"You've always won when I've played," said Dolly. "I've been looed every time."

"You oughtn't to begrudge me one run of luck, when I've lost so much," said Miles, who, since he began, had destroyed paper counters of his own making, supposed to represent considerably above £1,000, and had also,—which was of infinitely greater concern to him,—received an amount of ready money which was quite a godsend to him.

"What's the good of talking about it," said Nidderdale. "I hate all this row about winning and losing. Let's go on, or go to bed." The idea of going to bed was absurd. So they went on. Sir Felix, however, hardly spoke at all, played very little, and watched Miles Grendall without seeming to watch him. At last he felt certain that he saw a card go into the man's sleeve, and remembered at the moment that the winner had owed his success to a continued run of aces. He was tempted to rush at once upon the player, and catch the card on his person. But he feared. Grendall was a big man; and where would he be if there should be no card there? And then, in the scramble, there would certainly be at any rate a doubt. And he knew that the men around him would be most unwilling to believe such an accusation. Grasslough was Grendall's friend, and Nidderdale and Dolly Longestaffe would infinitely rather be cheated than suspect any one of their own set of cheating them. He feared both the violence of the man he should accuse, and also the impassive good humour of the others. He let that opportunity pass by, again watched, and again saw the card abstracted. Thrice he saw it, till it was wonderful to him that others also should not see it. As often as the deal came round, the man did it. Felix watched more closely, and was certain that in each round the man had an ace at least once. It seemed to him that nothing could be easier. At last he pleaded a headache, got up, and went away, leaving the others playing. He had lost nearly a thousand pounds, but it had been all in paper. "There's something the matter with that fellow," said Grasslough.

"There's always something the matter with him, I think," said Miles. "He is so awfully greedy about his money." Miles had become somewhat triumphant in his success.

"The less said about that, Grendall, the better," said Nidderdale. "We have put up with a good deal, you know, and he has put up with as much as anybody." Miles was cowed at once, and went on dealing without manœuvring a card on that hand.

CHAPTER XXV.

In Grosvenor Square.

MARIE MELMOTTE was hardly satisfied with the note which she received from Didon early on the Monday morning. With a volubility of French eloquence, Didon declared that she would be turned out of the house if either Monsieur or Madame were to know what she was doing. Marie told her that Madame would certainly never dismiss her. "Well, perhaps not Madame," said Didon, who knew too much about Madame to be dismissed; "but Monsieur!" Marie declared that by no possibility could Monsieur know anything about it. In that house nobody ever told anything to Monsieur. He was regarded as the general enemy, against whom the whole household was always making ambushes, always firing guns from behind rocks and trees. It is not a pleasant condition for a master of a house; but in this house the master at any rate knew how he was placed. It never occurred to him to trust any one. Of course his daughter might run away. But who would run away with her without money? And there could be no money except from him. He knew himself and his own strength. He was not the man to forgive a girl, and then bestow his wealth on the Lothario who had injured him. His daughter was valuable to him because she might make

him the father-in-law of a Marquis or an Earl; but the higher that he rose without such assistance, the less need had he of his daughter's aid. Lord Alfred was certainly very useful to him. Lord Alfred had whispered into his ear that by certain conduct and by certain uses of his money, he himself might be made a baronet. "But if they should say that I'm not an Englishman?" suggested Melmotte. Lord Alfred had explained that it was not necessary that he should have been born in England, or even that he should have an English name. No questions would be asked. Let him first get into Parliament, and then spend a little money on the proper side,—by which Lord Alfred meant the Conservative side,—and be munificent in his entertainments, and the baronetcy would be almost a matter of course. Indeed, there was no knowing what honours might not be achieved in the present days by money scattered with a liberal hand. In these conversations, Melmotte would speak of his money and power of making money as though they were unlimited,—and Lord Alfred believed him.

Marie was dissatisfied with her letter,—not because it described her father as "cutting up very rough." To her who had known her father all her life that was a matter of course. But there was no word of love in the note. An impassioned correspondence carried on through Didon would be delightful to her. She was quite capable of loving, and she did love the young man. She had, no doubt, consented to accept the addresses of others whom she did not love,—but this she had done at the moment almost of her first introduction to the marvellous world in which she was now living. As days went on she ceased to be a child, and her courage grew within her. She became conscious of an identity of her

own, which feeling was produced in great part by the contempt which accompanied her increasing familiarity with grand people, and grand names and grand things. She was no longer afraid of saying No to the Nidderdales on account of any awe of them personally. It might be that she should acknowledge herself to be obliged to obey her father, though she was drifting away even from the sense of that obligation. Had her mind been as it was now when Lord Nidderdale first came to her, she might indeed have loved him, who, as a man, was infinitely better than Sir Felix, and who, had he thought it to be necessary, would have put some grace into his love-making. But at that time she had been childish. He, finding her to be a child, had hardly spoken to her. And she, child though she was, had resented such usage. But a few months in London had changed all this, and now she was a child no longer. She was in love with Sir Felix, and had told her love. Whatever difficulties there might be, she intended to be true. If necessary, she would run away. Sir Felix was her idol, and she abandoned herself to its worship. But she desired that her idol should be of flesh and blood, and not of wood. She was at first half-inclined to be angry; but as she sat with his letter in her hand, she remembered that he did not know Didon as well as she did, and that he might be afraid to trust his raptures to such custody. She could write to him at his club, and having no such fear, she could write warmly.

"—, Grosvenor Square. Early Monday Morning.

"DEAREST, DEAREST FELIX,

"I have just got your note;—such a scrap! Of course papa would talk about money because he never thinks of anything else. I don't know anything about money,

and I don't care in the least how much you have got. Papa has got plenty, and I think he would give us some if we were once married. I have told mamma, but mamma is always afraid of everything. Papa is very cross to her sometimes;—more so than to me. I will try to tell him, though I can't always get at him. I very often hardly see him all day long. But I don't mean to be afraid of him, and will tell him that on my word and honour I will never marry any one except you. I don't think he will beat me, but if he does, I'll bear it,—for your sake. He does beat mamma sometimes, I know.

"You can write to me quite safely through Didon. I think if you would call some day and give her something, it would help, as she is very fond of money. Do write and tell me that you love me. I love you better than anything in the world, and I will never,—never give you up. I suppose you can come and call,—unless papa tells the man in the hall not to let you in. I'll find that out from Didon, but I can't do it before sending this letter. Papa dined out yesterday somewhere with that Lord Alfred, so I haven't seen him since you were here. I never see him before he goes into the city in the morning. Now I am going down-stairs to breakfast with mamma and that Miss Longestaffe. She is a stuck-up thing. Didn't you think so at Caversham?

"Good-bye. You are my own, own, own darling Felix,

"And I am your own, own affectionate ladylove,

"MARIE."

Sir Felix when he read this letter at his club in the afternoon of the Monday, turned up his nose and shook his head. He thought if there were much of that kind of thing to be done, he could not go on with it, even

though the marriage were certain, and the money secure. "What an infernal little ass!" he said to himself as he crumpled the letter up.

Marie having intrusted her letter to Didon, together with a little present of gloves and shoes, went down to breakfast. Her mother was the first there, and Miss Longestaffe soon followed. That lady when she found that she was not expected to breakfast with the master of the house, abandoned the idea of having her meal sent to her in her own room. Madame Melmotte she must endure. With Madame Melmotte she had to go out in the carriage every day. Indeed she could only go to those parties to which Madame Melmotte accompanied her. If the London season was to be of any use at all, she must accustom herself to the companionship of Madame Melmotte. The man kept himself very much apart from her. She met him only at dinner, and that not often. Madame Melmotte was very bad; but she was silent, and seemed to understand that her guest was only her guest as a matter of business.

But Miss Longestaffe already perceived that her old acquaintances were changed in their manner to her. She had written to her dear friend Lady Monogram, whom she had known intimately as Miss Triplex, and whose marriage with Sir Damask Monogram had been splendid preferment, telling how she had been kept down in Suffolk at the time of her friend's last party, and how she had been driven to consent to return to London as the guest of Madame Melmotte. She hoped her friend would not throw her off on that account. She had been very affectionate, with a poor attempt at fun, and rather humble. Georgiana Longestaffe had never been humble before; but the Monograms were people so much thought of and in such an excellent set! She would do anything

rather than lose the Monograms. But it was of no use. She had been humble in vain, for Lady Monogram had not even answered her note. "She never really cared for anybody but herself," Georgiana said in her wretched solitude. Then, too, she had found that Lord Nidderdale's manner to her had been quite changed. She was not a fool, and could read these signs with sufficient accuracy. There had been little flirtations between her and Nidderdale,—meaning nothing, as every one knew that Nidderdale must marry money; but in none of them had he spoken to her as he spoke when he met her in Madame Melmotte's drawing-room. She could see it in the faces of people as they greeted her in the park,—especially in the faces of the men. She had always carried herself with a certain high demeanour, and had been able to maintain it. All that was now gone from her, and she knew it. Though the thing was as yet but a few days old she understood that others understood that she had degraded herself. "What's all this about?" Lord Grasslough had said to her, seeing her come into a room behind Madame Melmotte. She had simpered, had tried to laugh, and had then turned away her face. "Impudent scoundrel!" she said to herself, knowing that a fortnight ago he would not have dared to address her in such a tone.

A day or two afterwards an occurrence took place worthy of commemoration. Dolly Longestaffe called on his sister! His mind must have been much stirred when he allowed himself to be moved to such uncommon action. He came too at a very early hour, not much after noon, when it was his custom to be eating his breakfast in bed. He declared at once to the servant that he did not wish to see Madame Melmotte or any of the family. He had called to see his sister. He was

therefore shown into a separate room where Georgiana joined him. "What's all this about?"

She tried to laugh as she tossed her head. "What brings you here, I wonder? This is quite an unexpected compliment."

"My being here doesn't matter. I can go anywhere without doing much harm. Why are you staying with these people?"

"Ask papa."

"I don't suppose he sent you here?"

"That's just what he did do."

"You needn't have come, I suppose, unless you liked it. Is it because they are none of them coming up?"

"Exactly that, Dolly. What a wonderful young man you are for guessing?"

"Don't you feel ashamed of yourself?"

"No;—not a bit."

"Then I feel ashamed for you."

"Everybody comes here."

"No;—everybody does not come and stay here as you are doing. Everybody doesn't make themselves a part of the family. I have heard of nobody doing it except you. I thought you used to think so much of yourself."

"I think as much of myself as ever I did," said Georgiana, hardly able to restrain her tears.

"I can tell you nobody else will think much of you if you remain here. I could hardly believe it when Nidderdale told me."

"What did he say, Dolly?"

"He didn't say much to me, but I could see what he thought. And of course everybody thinks the same. How you can like the people yourself, is what I can't understand!"

"I don't like them,—I hate them."

"Then why do you come and live with them?"

"Oh, Dolly, it is impossible to make you understand. A man is so different. You can go just where you please, and do what you like. And if you're short of money, people will give you credit. And you can live by yourself, and all that sort of thing. How should you like to be shut up down at Caversham all the season?"

"I shouldn't mind it,—only for the governor."

"You have got a property of your own. Your fortune is made for you. What is to become of me?"

"You mean about marrying?"

"I mean altogether," said the poor girl, unable to be quite as explicit with her brother, as she had been with her father, and mother, and sister. "Of course I have to think of myself."

"I don't see how the Melmottes are to help you. The long and the short of it is, you oughtn't to be here. It's not often I interfere, but when I heard it I thought I'd come and tell you. I shall write to the governor, and tell him too. He should have known better."

"Don't write to papa, Dolly!"

"Yes, I shall. I am not going to see everything going to the devil without saying a word. Good-bye."

As soon as he had left he hurried down to some club that was open,—not the Beargarden, as it was long before the Beargarden hours,—and actually did write a letter to his father.

"My dear Father,

"I have seen Georgiana at Mr. Melmotte's house. She ought not to be there. I suppose you don't know it, but everybody says he's a swindler. For the sake of

the family I hope you will get her home again. It seems to me that Bruton Street is the proper place for the girls at this time of the year.

"Your affectionate son,

"ADOLPHUS LONGESTAFFE."

This letter fell upon old Mr. Longestaffe at Caversham like a thunderbolt. It was marvellous to him that his son should have been instigated to write a letter. The Melmottes must be very bad indeed,—worse than he had thought,—or their iniquities would not have brought about such energy as this. But the passage which angered him most was that which told him that he ought to have taken his family back to town. This had come from his son, who had refused to do anything to help him in his difficulties.

END OF VOL. I.

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